

TRACTS.

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AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. VIII.

CONTAINING,

- I. SMITH'S DESIGNED END TO THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.
 - II. A SHORT VIEW OF THE LIFE, CHARACTER, AND SENTIMENTS OF MR. JOHN MORT, IN A SERMON, BY H. TOULMIN.
 - III. DR. HARTLEY OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.
-

LONDON:

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2754-1

A
DESIGNED END
TO THE
SOCINIAN-CONTROVERSY:

O R,

A RATIONAL AND PLAIN
DISCOURSE

TO PROVE,
THAT NO OTHER PERSON BUT THE FATHER
OF CHRIST IS GOD MOST HIGH.

BY JOHN SMITH.

*Father,—This is life eternal to know thee the only true
God. John xvii. 3.*

L O N D O N :

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DECLARATION

TO THE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE

AND IN ASSEMBLY

BY

JOHN W. ALBANY

1847

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY J. ALBANY, 1847.

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P R E F A C E.

IT would doubtless have afforded no inconsiderable satisfaction to several readers of the following very valuable tract to have been introduced to the personal history of the writer; but the most probable sources of biographical information have been examined without success. What has been discovered respecting the tract itself is at the reader's service.

“ The designed end to the Socinian controversy,
“ or a rational and plain discourse to prove, that no
“ other person but the father of Christ is God most
“ high;” was published by Mr. John Smith in
1695. The author discovers a very considerable
acquaintance with the christian scriptures, and a
mind influenced by a love of truth. These circum-
stances lead us to wish to know more of a man to
whom the christian world is much indebted, and
A 2 proportionably

proportionably to lament, that we are not supported by authentic documents in a more ample narrative.

It appears, however, that the publication of this tract provoked the notice of the civil power, which had so recently effected the revolution of 1688, and afterwards, in other instances, conducted itself with so little respect to the rights of conscience.* We are told that, “ besides several libels against the state, “ many heretical and socinian books have been seized “ and stopt, particularly one entitled, *A brief and “ clear confutation of the trinity*, which was publicly “ burnt, by order of both houses of parliament, and “ the author prosecuted; and one other lately taken “ with its author, called *A designed end to the socinian “ controversy, or a rational and plain discourse to prove, “ that no other person but the father of Christ is God “ most high.* †” This ineffectual mode of suppressing the volume before us is ascribed by Dr. Hickes to the

* See Statute 9 & 10 Wm. III. c. 32.

† See “ Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and “ Dr. Tillotson; occasioned by the late funeral sermon of the former upon the latter.” 4to. pp. 88, 1695, with a preface and appendix.—Ap. No. viii.

P R E F A C E.

v

the active vigilance of archbishop Tillotson.* But whether he was justified in imputing to the amiable and candid Tillotson the unchristian persecution of the reputed heretics of those days may reasonably be questioned. Dr. Birch says, that bishop Burnet gave "a strong and clear answer" to Dr. Hickes in "reflections" upon these discourses in 1696; † but with what effect, with respect to the imputation cast upon him and his excellent friend the archbishop, I am not competent to say, not having them before me. Dr. Hickes certainly exhibited so very acrimonious a spirit against the character and reputation of the deceased archbishop, as greatly to weaken any insinuation or unproved charge made by him against his grace's catholicism: and in order effectually to exculpate him from having had any concern in the seizure of Mr. Smith's *Designed end to the socinian controversy*, which was not published till 1695, and

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consequently

* See the preface to "Some Discourses, &c." which are said by Dr. Birch to have been written by Dr. Hickes.—See his "Life of Tillotson." 8vo. 1752, p. 7.

† See Birch's "Life of Tillotson." p. 345.

consequently from having any share in causing the author to be apprehended, it is sufficient to observe that the archbishop died November 22, 1694. But from the circumstance of this prosecution, let who may have been *the promoter* of it, the discourser (Dr. Hickes) very justly remarks, that, “certainly there
 “must be something formidable in their books, and
 “some reasonings in them, which these men of
 “latitude” (as he is pleased to call them) “cannot
 “well answer, that they use so much diligence to
 “suppress them.”*

The unitarian controversy engaged very general attention towards the close of the last century, inasmuch that, when the authority and reasons in vindication of the proper unity of God were found too strong for the host of orthodox theologians who opposed them, they procured the assistance of their allies, the tories of that day, to pass an act of parliament to remove all doubts, and to establish the doctrine of the trinity under no less a sanction than the omnipotence of the legislature. Various learned, judicious, and masterly tracts were published upon the
 subject

* See “Some Discourses, &c.” pref. p. 6 & 7.

subject about this time.* Mr. Locke was a writer in this controversy in vindication of “ the God and “ father of our lord Jesus Christ being the only God “ and father of Christians.”† Many others also, though of less celebrity, maintained the cause of the divine unity, with learning, ability, and candor, which their opponents could answer with nothing so forcible and resistless as a penal statute adapted to the purpose.

It is a strong presumptive argument in favor of archbishop Tillotson to know, (as Dr. Jortin hath expressed himself,) “ that he made some concessions “ concerning socinians which never were, and never “ will be forgiven him, and that he broke an ancient “ and fundamental rule of theological controversy,
“ allow

* See “ A collection of tracts, proving the God “ and father of our lord Jesus Christ, the only true “ God;” in three small volumes in quarto, 1691, 1693, and 1695.

† See “ The exceptions of Mr. Edwards, in his “ causes of atheism against the *reasonableness of christi- anity* &c.” examined:—in a third collection of tracts, &c. 1695, and bishop Law’s preface (p. vii.) to his edition of Locke’s “ Works.” 1777.

*“ allow not an adversary to have either common sense or
“ common honesty.*

“ Now, by way of contrast, proceeds Dr. Jortin,
“ behold the character of the same persons, from the
“ *masterly and impartial* hand of South: ‘ The so-
‘ cinians are impious blasphemers, whose infamous
‘ pedigree runs back [from wretch to wretch] in a
‘ direct line to the devil himself; and who are fitter
‘ to be crushed by the civil magistrate, as destructive
‘ to government and society, than to be confuted as
‘ merely heretics in religion.’ “ Such, says Jortin,
“ is the true agonistic style, or intolerant spirit: such
“ the courage of a champion, who challenges his
“ adversary, and then calls upon the constable to
“ come and help him !”*

But South is not the last champion of this sort,
who, besides consigning his adversary to the civil
power, “ writes like a man, but bites like a dog.”
South does indeed call upon the constable, which
implies a deliverance “ by due course of law,” but

Horsley

* See Birch’s “ Life of Tillotson.” App. No. iii.
or Jortin’s “ Tracts, &c.” Octavo. 1790. vol. i.
p. 366 . . 369.

Horsley first endeavours to excite an exterminating spirit among the multitude, and then to direct it against a large body of useful, or, at least, unoffending men. There now lies before me a circular letter from this bishop to the clergy of his Welch diocese, soliciting their pastoral services in behalf of the emigrant clergy of France, and inviting them to undertake a croisade against the protestant dissenters. An extract from this very extraordinary letter will shew what some men's untamed spirit of insolence and intolerance will lead them to say, and how great and unprovoked injuries other men are made to bear. An insolence and intolerance which border on insanity; and which nothing but a deprivation of the reasoning powers of man can excuse.—“ You will “ remind them” (i. e. your parishioners), writes this christian, protestant, and newly translated bishop to the clergy of his late diocese, “ that the persons for “ whom we, in the name of God, implore their aid, “ however they may differ from us in certain points “ of doctrine, discipline, and external rites, are “ nevertheless our brethren, members of Christ, “ children of God, heirs of the promises; adhering “ indeed

“ indeed to the church of Rome, in which they have
“ been educated, but more endeared to us by the
“ example they exhibit to us of patient suffering for
“ conscience-sake, than estranged by what we deem
“ their errors and corruptions. More dear and near
“ to us, in truth, than some, who, affecting to be
“ called our protestant brethren, have no other title
“ to the name of protestant than a jew or a pagan,
“ who not being a christian, is for that reason only
“ not a papist; persons who, professing to receive
“ our lord as a teacher such as the mahometans re-
“ ceive him, call in question, however, what is not
“ called in question by the mahometans, the in-
“ fallibility of his doctrine; and under the mask of
“ affected zeal for civil and religious liberty are
“ endeavouring to propagate in this country those
“ very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the
“ rights of man, and an unlimited right of private
“ judgment in opposition to ecclesiastical discipline;
“ those treasonable and atheistical notions which in
“ France have wrought the total subversion of the
“ civil and ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion
“ of all rights, the abolition of all property, the
“ extinction

P R E F A C E.

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“ extinction of all religion, the loss of all liberty to
“ the individual, except that of blaspheming God
“ and reviling kings !!! ”

Such are the calumnies of intemperate passion,
of fiery zeal, and of interested and revengeful in-
tolerance !

NOV. 6, 1793.

J. D.

The object of this work is to present a
clear and concise statement of the principles
of the individual, and of the relation of
the individual to the community.
Such are the elements of the science of
politics, and of the science of government.

J. D.

Nov. 6, 1853

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THE reader is desired to take notice, that these papers were written at different times, as matter did offer itself to the author's mind; and for that reason some particulars are therein touched upon more than once; for which it is hoped, however, that there will need little excuse, since in relation to the whole design it may be pertinent enough. The method also, for that reason, is somewhat unusual; but I have ventured however to let it pass as it is, since not method but matter in such cases is chiefly to be minded: and I doubt not but that in one part or other thereof, every part of the controversy will be found to be both fully and fairly discussed: and I wish none that read it may be of that evil temper as to forbear the acknowledgment of that truth, which yet in conscience they dare not deny; like those Jews of old, who though they believed in Christ, yet did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; John xii. 42.

ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE
SECOND EDITION IN MDCCXCIII.

IT is presumed, that the good sense which abounds in this little tract will recommend it to the attention of the friends of truth and free inquiry, although it is certain, that, since the author's time, great improvements have been made in translating and explaining many passages of scripture cited in it. The doctrine of the trinity which he opposeth hath been proved by many learned men in the present century to derive its chief support from false readings and false translations of the Bible.

M. D.

A
DESIGNED END
TO THE
SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.

THAT THERE IS A GOD.

THAT there is such a being as God, (by which is meant one eternal mind, essence or spiritual power, who is the original and first cause of all other beings besides,) is manifest; for it is not possible that any other being whatsoever, could give a being to itself: certainly nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that a thing can act any-ways towards its own production before it is

Hence it follows, that every one of these beings is but the real effect of this first cause that had a being before it; and this first cause of necessity must have been eternal, and without beginning: since had there

been once no kind of being at all, there then could never have been such a being as God, no nor any other being besides; for doubtless, of nothing, nothing can be produced.

THAT THIS GOD IS BUT ONE IN NATURE OR ESSENCE.

AND as it is thus plain that there is a God, so it is utterly impossible that there can be any more than one God: for whoever is truly God must be absolutely infinite or immense; that is, *his divine essence must be boundless, and fill all that endless and inconceivable space that is without or beyond the limits of this world, as well as this world.*

For it is impossible, that any being whatever can *in any respect be greater than God is, or contain him;* for then he himself could not be truly infinite, nor excel in all perfections. The nature or essence therefore of God is infinite, and in extent is without bounds; and *it is self-evidently impossible for two or more infinitely extended beings to subsist together:* which demonstrates by consequence, that God can be but one as to his divine essence or nature.

And as right reason does plainly teach this truth, so do the scriptures as evidently declare the same: to instance in a few,—*The Lord he is God, there is none else besides him, Deut. iv. 35. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me, Deut. xxxii. 39. There is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee,*

thee, 1 Chron. xvii. 20. I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God, Is. xlv. 6. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one, 1 Cor. viii. 4. —To us there is but one God, 1 Cor. viii. 6. I might add a great number of other texts that speak to the very same purpose, but I think it is needless in a case so plain.

THAT THIS ONE TRUE GOD IS BUT ONE IN
PERSON.

Now as it is thus plain, that God is but one, as to his nature or essence; so it is evident likewise, that he can in no sense be any more than *one in person*: for if, as some affirm, the divine nature did contain in it several persons, as does the human nature, then each of those must be *truly immense, truly almighty, and truly most wise*, else they could not each of them be truly God, (*as some have unwarily asserted, and the trinitarian notion supposes*); for whoever is truly God must be every way thus qualified in all respects.

For if that person that is supposed to be God be *not truly immense*, then some other being of necessity must be greater than he; for whoever is not infinite must be bounded by some other being, which in that respect does truly surpass that bounded being in greatness: but (as I said before) *nothing can in any kind or respect whatsoever be greater than God is, or contain*

him; and by consequence he alone is truly immense.

The person that is truly God must be also almighty; that is, he must be able to do more than any, or than all other beings together can do: for doubtless none is the most high, but he that in might and strength does transcend all others. *Touching the Almighty, says Job, he excels in power, ch. xxxvii. 28.*

The person also that is truly God must be most wise and knowing: it is doubtless a property essential to the true God, to know more than any other being besides can know: *Of that day and hour, saith our saviour, knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father only; Matt. xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32.*

Now if that person who is truly God must be thus immense in his person, almighty in his power, and most wise in his knowledge; then it follows by direct consequence, that it is impossible for more than one person to be truly God: for nothing can be more absurd, than to believe or affirm, that two or three distinct beings, such as all personal beings are, can be each of them unlimited, as to the extent of their personal beings; can be each of them able to do more than the rest can do, or that each of them can know more than the others know.

Suppose, for instance, two such beings as *A* and *B*: Now if the person of *A* can do more than the person of *B*, then the person of *B* cannot do more than
the

the person of *A*; for if he could, then would not *A* be able to do more than *B*, and by consequence he could not be almighty.

Again, if the person of *A* be most wise, and knows more than the person of *B*, then *B* cannot know more than *A*; for if he did, then would not *A* know more than *B*, and so by consequence would not be most wise: which evidently demonstrates, that no more than one person can be truly God, since no more than one can be truly infinite in all these afore-mentioned divine perfections.

THAT THIS ONE PERSON WHO IS TRULY GOD,
IS HE ONLY WHO IS THE FATHER OF JESUS
CHRIST.

IT is undeniably evident from the Old Testament, that *the God of Israel*, or *the lord of hosts*, is the only true God: for thus it is written, *Thou art God, and thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth*, 2 Kings xix. 15. *There is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee*, 2 Chron. xvii. 20. *Thou art God alone*, Psalm lxxxvi. 10. *Besides me there is no God*, Isaiah xlv. 6. *I am God, and there is none else*, Isaiah xlv. 9. *Thou shalt know no other God but me*, Hosea xiii. 4. Now as this is plain beyond contradiction, so do all christians generally acknowledge, that the God here mentioned was he only who afterwards was called the Father of Jesus Christ.

And

And in the New Testament no truth is more fully and plainly expressed than this is : thus says our Lord himself, *Father,---This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*, John xvii. 1, 3. The same do his Apostles affirm ; *Blessed be God, even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ*, Eph. i. 3. *With one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. xv. 6. *We give thanks to God, and the Father of our lord Jesus Christ*, Coloss. i. 3. *He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father*, 1 Cor. xv. 24. *Therewith blefs we God, even the Father*, James iii. 9. *To us there is but one God, the Father*. 1 Cor. viii. 6.

Now it is impossible, that any one article of the christian faith can be more fully and plainly expressed in scripture than this is : the words can be understood in no other sense than what at the first sight they do plainly signify, and they give the most satisfying answer that can be given to any one that shall ask who God is ; namely, that he is only that most divine person who is the Father of Jesus Christ : And if in this case plain scripture is not to be relied on, I see not of what great use our bibles can be to us.

YET THIS SO PLAIN AND EVIDENT TRUTH IS.
COMMONLY DENIED.

For a very great number of professed christians do notwithstanding believe, that in the godhead there are indeed more persons than only one; and that Jesus Christ, the son of God, is God also as well as his Father. But of this error the former arguments are sufficient to convince them: for if *none be God but the Father of Christ*, then cannot the son be truly God also, *since he in no sense whatever can be said to be the Father of Christ*, that is, of himself.

And certainly if men would resolve faithfully to make use but of common sense and common honesty, they could not but be convinced of the absurdity of this opinion, by only reading so often as they do in the New Testament of Jesus Christ his being *the son of God*: for how can he be God himself, who truly is no other than the son of God? If he be the son only, then it is plain that he is not the Father also, who alone is God: for it is impossible, according to the notion we have of sons, for any being whatever to be the son of himself. No understanding man, when at any time he hears mention made of the son of a King, is so idle in his imagination as to believe, that thereby is meant the King who is his Father; he certainly then must be very senseless, who can think that by the son of God is, any-ways meant God, that is, God most high.

CHRIST

CHRIST NOT THE TRUE GOD, BECAUSE HE
HIMSELF HAS A GOD ABOVE HIM.

It is also evident beyond contradiction, that our blessed Lord cannot be truly God, since both he himself and his apostles do very plainly acknowledge, that he has a God above him: for instance, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Mat. xxvii. 46. *I ascend to my God, and to your God,* John xx. 17. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,* Rev. iii. 12. *The head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God,* 1 Cor. xi. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. i. 3. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows I lie not,* 2 Cor. xi. 31. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you the spirit,* Eph. i. 17. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,* Heb. i. 8, 9.

These texts are very plain, and need no interpretation to make them be understood. Now if our Lord Christ have thus a God above him, then it is evident, if any thing in the world be so, that he himself is not God most high.

CHRIST NOT GOD, BECAUSE WHAT HE DOES
IS BY A POWER RECEIVED FROM GOD.

THIS truth Christ himself does plainly declare ; *I can, saith he, of my own self do nothing, John v. 30. All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth, Mat. xxviii. 18. When the multitude saw his miracles, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men, Mat. ix. 8.* Now these things can in no tolerable sense be said of him that is truly God : for he that is God most high hath essentially in himself all kind of divine dignity and excellency, and cannot, without the highest of blasphemies, be in any sense said to receive them of another.

But of our lord it is recorded, that he neither said nor did any thing, especially in the work of our redemption, but what he was commanded to say and do by his Father ; *I have not spoken of myself, (saith he,) but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. John xii. 49.*

Is he able to save the world ? To this power he was raised by God : *him hath God exalted to be a prince and a saviour, Acts v. 31.* Can he give power to believers to become the sons of God ? This power he also has received : *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, John xvii. 2.* Has he power to raise from the dead ? Even this power
also

also he did receive: *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son to have life in himself,* John v. 26. Has he power to judge the world? It is God that does enable him to do this: *This is he that was ordained of God to be judge of quick and dead,* Acts x. 42. *I can do nothing of myself; as I hear, I judge,* John v. 30.

Moreover, it is thus said, *The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them,* John xvii. 22. *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me,* Luke xxii. 29. *The God of our lord Jesus Christ hath put all things under his feet,* Eph. i. 17. Now they must impose strangely upon their own understandings, that can (unrequired by the gospel) believe him to be truly God, even infinite in all perfection, of whom it is said so plainly, that whatever power and dignity he has is given him by another.

CHRIST NOT GOD, BECAUSE GOD AND HE
ARE PLAINLY DISTINGUISHED.

THIS consideration alone of itself is a very strong argument, to prove our lord Christ not to be really and truly God, since he is every where spoken of as a person that differs as much from God, as a noble subject differs from his prince or king. Thus it is said of him, that *God anointed him,* Acts x. 38. That he *offered himself up to God,* Heb. ix. 14. That *God raised him from the dead,* Acts ii. 24.

That

That he was *exalted by God*, Acts ii. 33. That he *ascended to God*, John xx. 17. That he *sits at God's right-hand*, Acts vii. 56. That *God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*, Eph. iv. 32. That he *bath redeemed us unto God by his blood*, Rev. v. 9. That *the God of our lord Jesus Christ hath put all things under his feet*, Eph. i. 22.

I might collect a very great number of other places that speak to the very same purpose, all which do evidently demonstrate, that the true God is not Jesus Christ: for if Jesus were *sent of God*, and *raised up from the dead by God*, and *sits now at God's right-hand*, &c. then it is plain, that there is as great a difference between the true God and him, as there is between a prince and him whom he is said to honour or employ.

It would be strangely absurd for a man to affirm, that *God can be sent of God*; that *God can pray to God*; that *God can ascend to God*; that *God can sit at God's right-hand*; and that *God shall deliver up the kingdom to God*, that *God may be all in all*. He that can believe this possible is fitted for the reception of the most ridiculous and absurd errors that were ever found in the world.

OF THAT ACCOUNT WHICH THE SCRIPTURES
GIVE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

As from what has been said before it appears very plainly what kind of person Christ our Lord is not; so it will be likewise necessary to shew what the scriptures do declare concerning him as to what he is. Now if we consider well the general scope and tendency of those sacred writings, we shall perceive very plainly, that Christ, or the messiah, according to the promises, was really to be of the same nature with them, which he came to redeem; that *as by man came death, so by man might come also the resurrection of the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 21. It was by the *seed of the woman* that the *serpent's head was bruised*, Gen. iii. 15.

To *Abraham* the promise was made, that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xxviii. 14. *Moses* tells the children of *Israel*, that the Lord their God should raise up unto them a prophet like unto him, Deut. viii. 15. Of this man's seed, (namely *David's*,) saith *St. Paul*, hath God raised up unto *Israel* a saviour, *Jesus*; Acts xiii. 23. In the fulness of time God sent forth his son, made of a woman, Gal. iv. 4. From all which places it is manifest, that, as to the personal nature of Christ, he is the same as were those human ancestors from whom he did lineally descend; *In all things he was like unto his brethren, except in being a sinner*; Heb. ii. 17. iv. 15.

And

And accordingly we find him almost every where mentioned by that plain denomination and term of *A MAN*; *Ye seek* (saith he himself) *to kill me, A MAN who hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God*, John viii. 40. *After me cometh A MAN that is preferred before me*, John i. 30. *Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN approved of God by wonders and signs which God did by him*, Acts xiii. 38. *He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by THAT MAN whom he hath ordained*, Acts xvii. 31. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, THE MAN Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. *But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood*. Heb. ii. 7. *But THIS MAN, after he had once offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right-hand of God*, Heb. x. 12. I could name a multitude of others, but I think it is needless.

Now to me it is strange, that any should so much as imagine that the believing and asserting of Christ to be truly an human person should derogate from his true honour and dignity, when the gospel does so frequently assert him to be such; whereas on the contrary, it is not said so much as once, that he is God most high, or that he is one of that sacred three which do constitute or make up the true Godhead: these unscriptural titles are derived only from the mere opinions and traditions of either deceived or deceiving men, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, so that they cannot see or discern the truth.

THE PRIMITIVE CONFESSIONS CONCERNING
CHRIST WERE ;

NOT that Jesus our lord was God equal to the Father in all kind of divine perfections, nor that he was God of the substance of his Father, as he was man of the substance of his mother, as some have taught in after-times. All that those first confessions do contain was this, that *he was the Christ, the son of God, and the saviour of the world.*

This was the faith of *Martha* ; *She said unto him, Yea lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God, that should come into the world,* John xi. 27. This was *St. Peter's* faith, *Thou art Christ the son of the living God,* Mat. xvi. 16. This was the *Eunuch's* faith, *I believe that Christ is the son of God,* Acts viii. 37. This was the faith of the *Mariners* ; *Of a truth thou art the son of God,* Mat. xiv. 33. And the faith of *Nicodemus* was, *We know thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him,* John iii. 2.

St. Paul is also said to preach Christ in the synagogues, that he was *the son of God*, Acts ix. 20. He is said also to testify to the Jews, *not that Jesus was God*, but that *Jesus was the Christ*, Acts xviii. 5. *We have seen and do testify* (saith *St. John*) *that the Father sent the son to be the saviour of the world,* 1 John iv. 14. Here is no trinity in unity, nor god-man, nor Hypostatical union, so much as mentioned, nor any other of those hard and cramping names with which the church of God has been since perplexed.

THE UNDOUBTED FAITH ON WHICH THE
SALVATION OF ALL CHRISTIANS DOES
DEPEND,

Is no other than this : *These things*, saith St. John, *are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name*, John xx. 31. *If we confess with our mouth the lord Jesus, and believe in our heart, that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved*, Rom. x. 9. *Whoever shall confess, that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*, 1 John iv. 15. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth, that Jesus is the son of God?* 1 John v. 5. These are a plain account of that faith which now is indispensably required of every christian in relation to Christ.

The scripture *nowhere* enjoins us to believe, on pain of damnation, either that Jesus is God most high, or that he is indeed both God and man, or that he was eternally begotten of the Father. It only teaches us thus much concerning him, that *the man Christ Jesus is the mediator between God and men*, 2 Tim. ii. 5. *That he is the propitiation of the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. *That it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself*, Col. i. 20. *That there is no salvation in any other*, Acts iv. 12. *That he appears now in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24. And that *he shall judge both quick and*
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dead, at the latter day, Acts x. 42. These are fundamentals so plain, and so undoubted, that all christians do universally agree in the profession of them, as they likewise would do in all other truths, were nothing but what is really such imposed on the faith of believers.

OF THE TRANSCENDENT DIGNITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

AND now although from what has been said hitherto, it be plainly evident, *that the Godhead does consist but of one divine person only, even the Father of Christ*; and that Jesus, called otherways in scripture the son of God, is no other than an *human person*: yet it is plain also that he is *not a common man*, but the chief and most transcendently excellent of all human beings, yea in dignity above even the angels.

For as his conception in the womb of a virgin was miraculous, so were his life and actions a wonder: he made a perfect conquest both of death and the devil; and in that great instance of magnanimity has outdone all the renowned heroes both of Greece and Rome. And unto which of the angels said God at any any time, *sit thou on my right-hand?* but to this dignity is Jesus exalted, Heb. i. 13. God has crowned him with glory and honour, Heb. ii. 9. And anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, Heb. i. 9. Angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

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He is ascended into heaven in a triumphant manner: and as *he now sits there at God's right-hand in glory*, so at the last day shall he come down from thence, *to judge mankind*, with such a surprising majesty as shall amaze and confound the world. It is doubtless impossible for any human understanding to conceive, or tongue to express this most excellent man's transcendent dignity; his greatness must needs be very extraordinary, who is thus set even *above the angels, is the head of every man, and the prince of the kings of the earth.* 1 Peter iii. 22. 1 Cor. xi. 3. Rev. i. 5.

And now if to those foregoing considerations we add, that of his most admired love to us sinful mortals, *in making peace for us by the blood of his cross*, Coloss. i. 20: and in undergoing, with invincible patience, all those indignities and miseries which did befall him in this the course of that glorious work of his, *the opening for men a new and living way to the regions of bliss*: the consideration of this, I say, added to that other of his most transcendent glory and power, ought evermore to raise up in us that veneration which is suitable to such most wonderful instances of unconceivable majesty and heroic affection.

YET IT IS NOT ANY WAY JUSTIFIABLE TO
HONOUR CHRIST FALSLY.

As the glory of God is not to be advanced by falshood, so neither can we truly honour Christ by lies; he desires no such thing at our hands, neither at the last day will he reward us for affirming him to be that which indeed he is not: they only give true honour to Christ, who own him for the undoubted Messiah, or the son of God, and do stedfastly both believe and obey his gospel.

As for the other vain and ungrounded opinions of men concerning him, they no ways conduce to the glory of our blessed redeemer. It is said indeed, that we should *honour the son, as we honour the Father*, John v. 23. But that word *AS* does not import an equal honour, no more than it does import an equal holiness and purity, when we are commanded to purify ourselves *AS* he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And *AS* he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Peter i. 15.

Besides, the word *honour* is of a doubtful import, and doth oftentimes signify only obedience, as is evident from Ephesians vi. 1, 2, where by *honour thy father and mother* is clearly signified, *obey your parents*. And accordingly Dr. Clagget, in his paraphrase on the place, makes it *to be an honouring the son with the same faith and obedience*; implying, that we are as much bound to believe and obey the gospel of Christ in the New Testament, as we are the law of God recorded in the Old; that since he

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is made judge of the world, to be certain he will not suffer the breach of his own laws to go unpunished.

Doubtless we ought to be as careful of ascribing to Christ those glories which are his, as we are to give to God Almighty that honour which essentially belongs to himself: and no man can think or speak too honourably of his redeemer, so long as he no ways does thereby rob God the Father of that truly divine honour which is his indispensable due. Our lord, who sought not his own glory, (John viii. 50.) will give us no thanks for such honours as do naturally derogate from his Father's dignity: but such is their honour who make the son to be God; for then, since but one person can be truly God, they do assert by consequence, that the Father is not so.

God has indeed highly exalted Jesus, his beloved son, and has given him a name above every name, and has put all things under his feet. But when all things are said to be thus put under him, *it is manifest that he himself is excepted that did put all things under him*, 1 Cor. xv. 27. So that notwithstanding the great and mighty dignities to which God hath exalted Christ, yet he has still reserved to himself this most supreme royalty of being *the God and head of Christ*. God hath given him indeed a kingdom; but when the intent of this government of his is accomplished, he shall again resign it back, that so God in that after-state of eternity may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 28.

ANSWERS TO THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS MADE AGAINST THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE.

AND now though, from what has been already said, no man whose understanding is not enslaved by the tyranny either of self-conceit, interest, or education, can doubt of so great a truth as this is; namely, that no personal being whatever, besides the Father of Christ, is God most high; as also that other branch thereof, that Jesus our lord, as to his nature, is the same with them whom he came to redeem. Yet since there have been many objections raised against it, I will endeavour, as briefly as I can, to give them such reasonable answers as shall make these truths beyond exception.

OF THE NAMES OF GOD GIVEN TO CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ of necessity must be God, since in several places of scripture he is expressly called by the name of God. I answer, *a God he undoubtedly is, and a mighty God too, according to the way of expression used in those antient times; in which those were called Gods who either represented God's person, or acted in his name and by his authority: but he is not God Almighty.*

When the jews did accuse him for making himself God, he thus vindicates his innocence; *If, saith he, they are called Gods to whom the word of God*

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came—Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the son of God? John x. 35, 36. Christ had as good a right to this title as any of the rest, if not a better, and therefore it could be no blasphemy to appropriate the same to himself, had he done so; but they lied, for he did not do it, he only said, that he was the son of God, calling God his Father.

OF THE MEDIATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

OTHERS object, that if Christ were not God as well as man, he could not have been a fit mediator between God and man, since in such a case, say they, he ought no way to be exactly the person concerned. A fit mediator between God and man must neither be only God, nor only man, but one who, by nature, is between these two, even God as well as man.

I answer: It is not necessary, that a mediator should be of such a middle nature, nor does the scripture any where assert it: there is always supposed in the work of reconciliation, one offended, another offending, and a third not concerned in the quarrel, interposing to make peace between them. Now in this sense Christ, though but a man, was a very fit and proper mediator: Had he been God, he had been the party offended; had he been a sinful man, he had been one of that party that gave the offence;

offence; but being a man perfectly righteous, he therefore was fit to intercede between God and sinners.

That Christ is our mediator is plain and evident; and it is as plain, that he is only a man, and not both God and man, as some assert: *There is, saith the scripture, one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii 5.* And it is most wonderful, that, in a matter so manifestly evident, men should dare impose upon the world another faith, or be induced to believe contrary to so plain and evident a part of God's word.

OF THE ONENESS OF GOD AND CHRIST.

Others object, that Christ Jesus must needs be God, because it is said, *I and my Father are one, John x. 30.* And again; *There are three that bear record—and these three are one, 1 John v. 7.* To these I answer, that though it is said they are one, yet it is not said what one they are; it is not said they are one God. This is only the ungrounded assertion either of some easy-minded, or else of some heedlessly bold and daring men.

Doubtless by that passage, 1 John v. 7, is meant, that these three are one as to the record, which they are there said to bear; they perfectly agree in that witness which they give concerning Jesus his being truly the Christ, as the foregoing verses do plainly intimate.

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As for that other passage, John x. 30, it is plain, that the oneness there meant is a mystical or moral, and not a natural oneness: and it is doubtless explained by John xvii. 11, where our saviour prays, that his disciples *might be one as he and his Father were one; that they, saith he, may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us*, ver. 21, which denotes an oneness only in the same mutual affection, for believers can be one in no other sense but this: and look what oneness there ought to be between one true believer and another, the same oneness there is between Christ and God, an inward intimacy, like that between real friends, of whom it is usual to say, they are all one, one in heart, and one in mind; as those in Acts iv. 32, are said to be.

OF THE EQUALITY OF GOD AND CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ must be God as well as his Father, because it is said, that *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Philip. ii. 6. To this I answer, that Christ himself hath told us, that *his Father is greater than he*, John xiv. 28. Hence it is plain, that if the son be any ways equal to the Father, yet it is really but in some particulars; for were the son equal to the Father in every respect,

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then it were impossible for the Father to be greater than he.

Whence it is clear, that the son cannot be equal to the Father in all things, though in some things he may. For instance, as God can save believers, so this also Christ can do; but this power of Christ is not an essential, but a derived power; *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,* John xvii. 2. These are our saviour's own words; and it is plain, that he from whom he receives the power must in power be superior unto him: he is not therefore almighty, and so by consequence not God most high, as the objection would suppose.

OF CHRIST'S BEING THE MAKER OF THE WORLD.

SOME object, that Christ is said to be the maker of the worlds, Heb. i. 2, and that all things were made by him, John i. 3, and therefore, say they, he of necessity must be God eternal. I answer, many things are spoken of Christ figuratively, as he is called a way, a door, a vine; and the bread in the sacrament is said to be his body. Now these, as those likewise which affirm him to be the maker of the world, are figurative or mystical expressions, in which one thing is said to signify another, as the old creation to set forth the new.

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There are in the scripture many dark and difficult passages, hard to be understood, as St. Peter expresses it, 2 Epist. iii. 16, which are doubtless true in some sense or other, could we be so happy as to hit upon the right: but in the mean time, till this can be done, it is certain that that can never be the right sense which contradicts the clearest and the plainest parts of the bible, as well as the greatest and most certain evidences of human understanding.

The general current of the scripture declares plainly, that *Christ, or the Messiah, was derived from the seed of Abraham; that he was the son of David; that he was made of a woman.* Wherefore it is self-evident, that in a literal sense he could never be the maker of the world, whose true ancestors were human persons, and who was born, or whose being did first begin to be, some thousands of years after the world was made. All scriptures therefore that affirm Christ to be *the maker of the world*, and to be *the maker of all things*, must be supposed to *speak figuratively*, and are no-ways to be understood in their literal sense and meaning.

In all such cases as this is, it is safer to say, that we cannot understand truly in what sense these scriptures are to be taken, than it is to conclude, that they mean that which other more numerous and plain places of scripture, as well as reason, do make to be impossible.

OF THE TWO NATURES OF JESUS CHRIST.

When we urge those scriptures which say that *Christ has a God above him; that he could do nothing of himself; that he knew not of the day of judgment; that he died to redeem mankind.* The opposers reply, that this is meant only as to his manhood or humane nature, but not as to his divine nature: for as he was God, none was his superior; he had all power essentially in himself, knew all things, and was truly immortal.

I answer; if Christ had really two natures in him, so that thereby he had been truly God as well as man, the person thus constituted or made up of two such natures could never have died according to his humane nature, if by his divine nature he had been truly God too: for how could he in person have been mortal in one capacity, if he had been on the contrary immortal in another? He also could not possibly have been ignorant in one capacity of what he knew in another; nor could he have wanted any kind of power, if in any of his capacities he had had all power essentially in himself; *one capacity must needs have supplied the defects of the other, especially the stronger of the weaker.*

OF CHRIST, HIS BEING THE SON OF GOD.

It is objected, that as Christ Jesus our lord was begotten by God on the body of the virgin; so he must necessarily be God of the substance of his Father, as he was man of the substance of his mother. In answer to this I say, that when the angel saluted the virgin with the glad-tidings of her being designed to be the mother *not of God*, but of the promised messiah, he told her, *that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the highest should overshadow her*; and that *therefore that holy thing which should be born of her should be called the son of God*, Luke i. 31, 35.

Now in the relation of this message these following particulars are remarkable:

First; That Jesus our lord is the son of God's power only, and not of his person; *the power of the highest shall overshadow thee*. It was of the woman only that he was made, Gal. iv. 4. (He was not generated, as some think, out of his Father's substance) and so by consequence was the son only of his miraculous and almighty power.

Secondly; It is not said, that therefore he shall be the natural son of God in that sense, as one man is the natural son of another; but therefore he shall be called the son of God, or he shall so be, and be so reputed, because in this one particular instance God

was to him instead of a father, not a father in the way that men are fathers to their children, but a father in respect of the virgin's receiving a power from God; thus in an uncommon manner to conceive in herself a son of *Joseph* and *David*, ver. 31, 32.

From what has been said I think it appears plainly, that Christ his being God of the substance of his father is an ungrounded conceit. The generation of our lord Jesus may be better accounted for another way: for God the almighty architect, and most-wise contriver of the creation, has reserved to himself a power to alter the course of nature whensoever he pleases; and as of a rib taken out from the side of *Adam* he made a woman, so by the same omnipotent power he did enable a virgin woman to conceive a son. If God had power out of mere stones to raise up children unto *Abraham*, Mat. iii. 9. we ought not to think it incredible, that in this miraculous manner he should out of the posterity of *Abraham* raise up this seed so wonderfully to be the world's redeemer.

OF THE POWER BY WHICH CHRIST DID MIRACLES.

SOME I find are strongly persuaded, that none but a person truly God could do those wonderful works that Christ did. To such I answer, that a man who
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is no God can do things that are miraculous, when God gives him a power to perform them. This is evident in those which *Moses* did, and in those also which were wrought by the apostles. The works of Christ indeed were extraordinary, yet not done by a power inherent in himself, but by a power derived from God: for himself tells us, that *all power was given unto him both in heaven and in earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. He was a man approved of God (saith the apostle) by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did by him, Acts ii. 22.

This power God did bestow on Christ, to be only an evidence of his being the true messiah: *Rabbi*, saith *Nicodemus*, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these things that thou dost except God be with him*, John iii. 2. *The works*, saith Christ, *which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me*, John v. 36. His works were an evident proof, that he was no impostor, but a true and most wonderful prophet; yet still he is said to be but a man, a man whom God was with, a man by whom God did wonders.

OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBLENESS OF GOD'S NATURE.

SOME object, that we must not think to comprehend the infinite nature of God, nor understand fully every particular that does relate to his divine perfections; for God is incomprehensible, and may, for aught we know, be that which yet we cannot plainly understand him to be, namely three in person, though but one in essence.

I answer; some of God's divine perfections are self-evident, and it is impossible that we can be mistaken therein: we are infallibly certain that he must be immense in person, almighty in power, and most wise in knowledge. And although we cannot know what God is in every respect, yet at the same time we may know certainly what indeed he is not; we know certainly, that *he is not a man*, or that he was made of a woman, as Christ was: we know certainly that *he is not mortal*, or that he cannot die, as Christ did; and we know certainly that *he has not a God above him*, as Christ had; and we know certainly, that *he has not received any kind of power from another*, as Christ Jesus is said to do.

And as one truth naturally infers another, so we do from hence assuredly conclude, that the person of Jesus our lord is not truly God, for *he was made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4. *He died to redeem us*, 2 Cor. v.

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14. *He had a God above him, 1 Cor. xi. 3. And he did receive all the power he had of another, John v. 30. Mat. xxviii. 18.*

We also know certainly, that if the divine godhead did consist of three persons, that then neither of the three persons singly can be God. If all three be but that one God together (as the trinitarians assert), then no one of them can be the true God by himself: for the same denomination cannot properly fit each person singly, as does fit them when conjoined in one mutual relation; for then they might be said to be indeed three supreme godheads, which is utterly impossible.

We also know certainly, that if any of the three persons, said to be in the godhead, be God by himself, as we have proved God the father undoubtedly is, then all the rest are but superfluous and unnecessary, as to the constitution of a godhead: for one infinite, almighty, and most wise person is as sufficient to all the purposes of a godhead, as ten thousand deities: but if three be but the one true God together, then no one of them can be that one true God by himself alone.

Lastly, we may be infallibly certain, that if doctrines grounded on so many numerous and great evidences both of scripture and self-evident reason, as these are, *That God is but one in person; that the person who is truly God, is no other than the Father of Jesus Christ; and that the most excellent of men, even*
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Jesus Christ, was only a man, be false; then we cannot be certain of the truth of any other principle in religion: if the evidences here collected do deceive us, it is in vain to hope by any other methods to find the truth.

OF THE COMING DOWN OF CHRIST FROM
HEAVEN.

SOME, as a proof of our saviour's godhead, urge those texts of scripture, where it is said, *He came down from heaven; came forth from the father, and ascended up where he was before.* To which I answer, that these prove not that for which they are intended, since it is plainly inferred from other scriptures, that Christ, some time before he was sent to declare the glad-tidings of the gospel, was assumed or taken up from the earth into his father's more immediate presence, (as *St. Paul* was some time after into the third heaven) there to be instructed in the mind and will of God, and to be invested with that great dignity and power of being a prince and a saviour.

To this the prophet *Daniel's* vision plainly alludes; *I saw, saith he, in the night-visions, and behold one like the son of man came to the antient of days, and they brought him before him; and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve him, Dan. vii. 13.* And from the words of our saviour himself it is plain, that

that he ascended up into heaven before he came down to declare his father's will to men; *No man, saith he, hath ascended into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, John iii. 13.* But no man but Christ ever came down from thence, which he never could have done had he not first ascended up thither. And that he was taken up to be instructed in the doctrine he was to publish to the world, is plain also; *The Father, saith he, that sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, John xii. 49.*

The redemption or restoration of mankind was a work of prodigious difficulty; and God, who had fore-ordained our saviour for the performance thereof, did for his greater encouragement present to his view *the glories, which before the world was (John xvii. 5.)* he had designed as a reward for his son the messiah: and it was doubtless this fore-taste of the divine and heavenly happiness that animated him with courage and fortitude to encounter all the difficulties that stood in his way. Hence it is said, *that he for the joy that was set before him did endure the cross, and despise the shame, Heb. xii. 2.*

OF THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ is said to be *before Abraham, before all things*, and that he *had glory with God before the world was*. This, say they, proves him to be eternal, and by consequence God. I answer,

swer, it is impossible that *Christ* can be the true and living God, since it is plain from what has been said in the former part of this work, that no person is truly God but the father of *Christ*, and that *Christ* has a God above him.

It is impossible for *Christ* to be eternal: for if God be his Father, as all acknowledge, then there was a time when the son had not a being: for to be a son, and to be equal in duration with his eternal Father that begot him, is undoubtedly impossible. Besides, we are told plainly, that the son was first *fore-ordained* before he came to have a being in these latter times, *I Pet. i. 20.* Now no *fore-ordained* being can possibly be eternal, since he that did ordain his being must be before him of necessity; and none but the very first of all beings can be truly eternal.

How could he have a being before *Abraham*, since it is declared he was of the seed of *Abraham*? How could he be before *David*, when it was out of *David's* posterity that God raised up Jesus according to his promise? And since Jesus the son of God was made of a woman, *Gal. iv. 4.* he could not be more antient in time than his mother that bare him.

It follows then that these scriptures on which the objection depends are purely figurative, and are not to be understood in their literal sense and meaning: they declare indeed, that *Christ* in some sense or other was before all things, before *Abraham*, and had glory before

before the world was, but not in that sense which the objectors suppose.

For it is not reasonable they should be understood in such a sense as contradicts both common understanding, and the greatest and plainest part of all the bible; they are places of the same nature with those which St. *Peter* affirms are *hard to be understood*, 2 Pet. iii. 16, and for that reason must by interpretation be brought to such a sense as is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and the most general scope and design of the holy scriptures: that is to say, that Christ was before *Abraham*, and before the world, &c. in the fore-ordination, decree and counsel of God, as in very deed St. *Peter* interprets them, when he saith thus of Christ, that *he verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times*, 1 Pet. i. 20.

OF THE SATISFACTION THAT CHRIST MADE TO GOD.

SOME argue thus; that if Christ had not been God, the sacrifice he offered, or the satisfaction he made for sinners, would not have been of that infinite worth which was necessary to satisfy the infinite justice of an offended God. I answer; The holy scriptures do not any where declare this doctrine, but on the contrary they tell us, that *as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation*;

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so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life, Rom. v. 18.

In which words are contained the whole doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ; and they imply thus much only, that God was so infinitely well pleased with the unspotted righteousness of his son, that for his sake he entered into a new covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he did engage himself to be still their God, and to afford them new means of becoming his people.

Thus did God, in infinite mercy, take all men again into favour for the sake of one perfectly righteous person, as in infinite justice he had before included all men under suffering for their first father's sin and transgression: So that *as by man came death, the punishment due to the breach of the first covenant, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 21.* All which was not the effect of any equivalent price which by Christ was given to God, but of the righteousness or obedience, which he performed to his father's command: for *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom. v. 19.*

Had Christ given to God, or made in our stead such a satisfaction as had been equivalent to the transgressions of all men, in order to redeem them, how then could eternal life be the free gift of God? How then could we be saved by free grace? and how could our sins be said to be forgiven? for gift, and
grace,

grace, and forgiveness, are not proper terms where an equivalent hath been received.

In the scripture it is said indeed, that Christ hath *obtained eternal redemption for us*, Heb. ix. 12. That *our peace is made through the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20. That we were *reconciled unto God by the death of his son*, Rom. v. 10. But it speaks not so much as one word of an equivalent.

But is it not said, say some, that *we are bought with a price*, 1 Cor. vi. 20; and that *the son of man has given his life a ransom for many*? Mat. xx. 28. I answer; these are but improper expressions, and are of the same nature with those which attribute hands, and eyes, and ears to God, which only imply that such acts are done by God which men usually perform by these bodily parts: Even so Christ is said to ransom us, and to buy us with a price, because by his means we do receive benefits equivalent to what they do who are set free from any kind of misery and bondage, by the payment of a price to them in whose bondage they are.

I shall, as a close to what I have to say on this head, add, that the justice of God spoken of is satisfied in a manner different from that which the adversary supposes: that is to say, the justice of God is satisfied in the certain punishment of *Adam's* transgression. *Adam* was commanded not to eat of the forbidden fruit on pain of death. This command he transgressed: and it is evident, that the punishment

was accordingly inflicted, for *Adam* died, and all his posterity do die likewise. Now when the penalty is thus inflicted, it is plain that justice is satisfied, and God in equity can require no more: but had not Christ obtained the favour to restore us to life after the punishment was thus inflicted, there had then been an end of mankind for ever.

From hence it is apparent how idle their fancy is who imagine Christ suffered what a'l mankind should have suffered, in order to free them for ever from suffering the same. For it is plain beyond contradiction, that we are not freed from death, the punishment due to that first transgression, for we all die; God does exact the forfeiture of every one of us, and by consequence his justice, as to that offence, is satisfied in all its demands. But this, say some, is false, for hell was our due as well as death; and from that Christ has freed every one that will believe. I answer; it is strange that Christ should free believers from one part of the punishment and not from the other: The scriptures no where reveal this secret, and for that reason we need not believe it.

Hell is the punishment which is due to the breach of the second covenant, and not of the first; now neither has Christ freed us from this by any thing that he has done and suffered for us. He by his righteousness did indeed procure for us a new covenant, and this new covenant of grace proposes life and pardon, on condition that we will believe its promises,
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sincerely endeavour to obey its precepts, and repent of sin; and they are truly the breakers of this covenant who live in a continued course of disobedience thereunto, and die at last in final impenitence. Now for such sinners as these there does remain no sacrifice; Christ never died for the redemption of such, and by consequence can no-ways be said to suffer in their stead.

OF THE OBJECT OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

Some object, that Jesus must be God, because it is recorded that his name, in the most primitive times of the gospel, was called upon; see *Acts* ix. 14. and xxii. 16. I answer; it is difficult to understand rightly what is there meant by calling on his name. This is certain, that the scripture no where enjoins us to make Christ the object of divine worship; it does rather expressly intimate the contrary. Our Lord forewarns his disciples not to ask any thing of him after his ascension, but bids them ask the Father in his name, *John* xvi. 23, 24, 26.

And when our Lord taught his own disciples to pray, he bids them say, *Our Father which art in heaven*, *Mat.* vi. 9. He does not direct them to say, O Christ hear us: He tells the Samaritan woman, that in the following times the *true worshippers should worship the Father*, *John* iv. 23. It was the doctrine of St. Paul, that in every thing by prayer and supplication

cation we should let our requests be made known unto God, *Phil.* iv. 6. And his own practice was according to his doctrine, *I bow my knee* (saith he) *to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *Eph.* iii. 14. and in many other places, God or the Father, not Christ, is mentioned as the alone object of divine adoration and petition: And it is worth noting, that Christ himself, whose example and footsteps we should follow, prayed always to his Father, and never did so much as once petition any other person of the supposed trinity.

And as to thanksgiving, it is plainly said to be the will of God, that we should do all in the name of the lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him, *Col.* iii. 17. And in another place we are commanded to give *thanks always unto God and the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ*, *Eph.* v. 20. And accordingly we read in a great number of places in the New Testament, how the apostles gave God thanks through Jesus Christ.

Jesus our lord is said in scripture *to appear in the presence of God for us*, *Heb.* ix. 24. *To be an advocate for sinners*, *1 John* ii. 1. *To make intercession for the saints*, *Rom.* iii. 34. *To be the Mediator between God and men*, *1 Tim.* ii. 5. *The minister of the new covenant*, *Heb.* viii. 6. All which proves him to be the person that pleads our cause, that solicits our acceptance, the great transactor and manager of all
affairs

affairs between God and us ; but it no-ways intimates any divine worship due to himself.

And indeed should we put Christ instead of the true God, and make him the alone object of divine prayer and thanksgiving, in whose name then shall we approach the throne of grace ? and by whom shall we render thanks to God ? who shall be our intercessor, our advocate, our mediator ? For my part I know but of one mediator, and that is the man Christ Jesus, *1 Tim. ii. 5.* and he only is the mediator between us men and the one true God, whom I before have proved to be only the father of Jesus Christ.

To make our lord Christ therefore the object of our divine addresses is as much as in us lies to deprive him of his mediatory office, which also by consequence is to deny him to be the son of God, even the beloved in whom alone we are accepted, *Eph. i. 6.* Yea, and by this we deny also the godhead of the Father, in whose stead we do by this means place Christ, than which there can be nothing in this world that is more truly antichristian ; see *1 John ii. 22.*

Now from the foregoing arguments it is evident, that whatever the sense of the objected places be, yet they cannot mean that which the objector intends, since in vastly more numerous and plain places the scriptures make God and not Christ to be the alone object of our divine addresses.

OF THE NOVELTY OF THE UNITARIAN
DOCTRINE.

SOME object against the doctrine of God's being but one in person the novelty thereof, that it is but of yesterday in comparison to that which asserts a trinity, which is, they say, of at least 1600 and odd years standing. I answer, that the objector is greatly mistaken: for can that be a new doctrine which has the greatest and the most plain part of the scripture for its foundation? The doctrine of God's being but one in person is in the former part of this work proved to be expressly and plainly contained both in the old and new Testament, and by consequence must needs be as ancient as the scriptures are.

The long continuance of the contrary doctrine, if it were as ancient as the objectors affirm, is yet no argument of its real truth. We read, that soon after the good wheat was sown, the enemy began to sprinkle tares in the field; *Mat. xiii. 25.* And the mystery of iniquity began to work even in *St. Paul's* time, *2 Thess. ii. 7.* So that it is no wonder, that some errors, as suppose this of the trinity, be almost of equal standing to the greatest truths: for where God has a church, the devil always has a chappel. It is not the long or short continuance of any doctrine, as to its profession, that makes it authentic, but that foundation of reason and scripture on which it is built: A tenet is not therefore true because of its long

long or general belief, if at the same time it contradicts self-evidence, and the general current of the sacred scriptures.

OF SCRIPTURE MYSTERIES.

SOME object, that much of the scripture is mere mystery; and therefore since all scripture is the object of our faith, we must sometimes believe things which we cannot comprehend. I answer, if we are to believe mysteries when clearly revealed, yet it does not from thence follow, that therefore we must believe impossibilities and contradictions. A just God can never lay on us a necessity of submitting to those terms and conditions of salvation which we cannot possibly understand. Hence it follows, that such obscure mysteries as evidently do contradict other plain truths, do no-ways concern us, so long as we are in the dark as to their true sense and meaning.

When a mystery is plainly expressed in scripture, as when it is said, a virgin did conceive a son, or that all men shall rise again, or that Christ shall judge the world, and no other plain scripture contradicts it, neither is it contrary to human reason; we are then to believe it, though it may be above our understanding to conceive which way the power of God should enable a virgin to conceive, or in what manner our scattered dust shall be recollected and revived, or how our blessed saviour can be made fit for so great a work as an universal judge.

But

But if some places in scripture had said these things, but others more numerous and plain had affirmed the contrary, or had it contradicted any self-evident principle of reason, we might then have rejected the belief thereof as safely and with as good authority as we now do that of the popish transubstantiation, which by the way is as expressly contained in scripture as is that of the trinity.

But for mysteries of a more doubtful nature, such as want the qualifications before expressed, they can no-ways oblige our faith, so long as their true meaning lies hid in obscurity of expression. There will be a time when all secret things shall be revealed, and all hidden things shall be brought to light, for which we must wait with patience, and not pretend, as some do, to explain even what is most hard and difficult, by such notions as are purely unintelligible; for this is but the more to confound their minds which were at a loss before.

It is true, if any man can rationally explain a mystery, he then does good service both to God and man; but this we are infallibly certain is never done, when the sense that is given of a doubtful place of scripture is contrary not only to the general current of the rest of the word of God, but is also a contradiction to the most self-evident sentiments of human understanding.

But some may say, if such passages as these are so generally to be overlooked in the business of religion,
why

why then did God cause them to be recorded in the sacred scripture? I answer, that it may as well be asked, why God made so many sorts of small, and, as we think, useless insects to live upon the earth, since we know not what benefit they are of to the world? Doubtless God, who does nothing in vain, made them for some great ends, though our short-sighted understanding cannot perceive what those excellent ends of his are: Even so likewise will his wisdom be manifested some way or other, by what to us is yet hard to be understood in scripture. And though we are ignorant of the true meaning of many of the most obscure and doubtful parts thereof, yet the ends and purposes of God in causing them to be written either are or shall in due time be accomplished.

In the mean time we ought to magnify that manifest goodness of God, who hath communicated to mankind such a number of plain and evident precepts as will be fully sufficient for salvation, if we carefully observe them. All are concerned in the business of life eternal, therefore hath God given us laws suitable to our common capacities: The gospel of Christ was preached to the poor, which intimates that the glad tidings of salvation did not consist of unintelligible mysteries, but of such plain and evident notions as did fit the understandings of the lowest people.

OF FAITH AND REASON.

There are a sort of people in the world of several false persuasions, who, when they can no longer maintain their errors against the power of true reason, fly to faith as their last refuge, and tell us, that it is by faith only that we are made able to *overcome the world*, 1 John v. 4. And that therefore it is necessary for men to believe what yet they cannot comprehend.

To this I answer, that faith indeed is the chief duty of the christian religion, because it is the belief of God's promises and threatnings that does engage mankind to the obedience of his precepts: Few, I doubt, would be religious, were there no fear of hell, nor hopes of heaven. It is said, that *all things are possible to him that believes*, Mark ix. 23. which in other words imports, that no difficulty nor hazard, how great soever, shall be able to stop them in their christian race: And in this sense it only is, that faith is said to be the victory that overcometh the world.

But though it is only a firm persuasion of the truth of God's promises and threatnings that inspires the faithful with courage to overcome and conquer the temptations not only of the devil, but of the lusts of this world too; yet *this is no argument, that therefore we must assent to that which we see no reason to believe*; for then we might be every whit as liable to believe things false as things that are true.

Wherefore

Wherefore it behoves us to be very watchful and circumspect in avoiding false principles ; for error of any kind will rather make us slaves to the devil, than enable us to overcome and conquer him. As therefore thou oughtest to embrace truth wheresoever thou dost find it, so be as ready to relinquish errors, when by carefully examining into religion thou hast discovered them to be such ; for *it is in every respect as heroic an act of faith to believe ourselves in the wrong when we really are so, as it is to adhere stedfastly to a truth undoubted.*

Know then that no kind of faith can be true that is certainly unreasonable, for the light of nature is as much God's law as divine revelation ; and none must ever think, that God's law can contradict itself. Right self-evident reason is the only touchstone that men have to distinguish truth from error : and it is the agreement even of scripture with this reason that makes us know it to be the word of God ; *it is not our forefathers saying so, but the exact concurrence of the witness of our spirit and that testimony.*

And though some would persuade us not at all to trust to reason in matters of religion ; yet it is observable, that those very men that exclaim most against it are yet necessitated to give reasons of their own to prove, if it were possible, that your reason is not to be relied on : and certainly that guide must needs be most safe, whom the whole world, in some kind or other, do find it so necessary to follow.

F

OF

OF THE TRUE NATURE OF RELIGION.

It is certain, that the laws of religion are designed by God for the only good of mankind ; he forbids some things and commands others, only because the one is prejudicial to man's well-being, and the other is absolutely necessary to his peace and happiness. In order then to the true happiness of this life, there is required a suitable way of living, even such as respects the universal good of the whole kind ; which, in short, is that which men call a life of holiness, or a life perfectly free from every kind of injustice or mischief both to one's self and others.

And as for the heavenly state, that is a state of perfect goodness and purity ; and it is impossible, that any one can take delight in that divine kind of life hereafter, which he hated here : And for that reason could the wicked be admitted into heaven, yet then would they be unhappy, by reason that *there* none of those base and ignoble pleasures would be found which their corrupted minds on earth did love and admire. It is then only a good life on earth that can fit us for the heavenly inheritance.

Now this goodness of life, so necessary to man's both present and future bliss, does not consist in speculation, but in practice. Belief is of no other use than as it enacts obedience ; and that is the reason, that the day of judgment is represented as taking no notice of the opinions, but of the practices of men.

Have

Have you fed the hungry? Have you clothed the naked? Have you visited the sick? *Mat. xxv. 36.* At that great solemnity the enquiry will not be, what had you in the world? or what did you profess? but what good deeds have you done therein? how has your care been to promote the universal good of rational beings? Have you renounced the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? *1 John ii. 26.* and lived *soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present world?* *Tit. ii. 12.* and done *justly, and loved mercy, and walked humbly with God?* *Mich. vi. 8.*

Now if it is the goodness of our practice that is the one thing necessary to salvation, then the disbelieving either a few doubtful, or else a few unreasonable opinions, can never be dangerous. Let us then (as to the point now under examination) ask ourselves but this one question, Will the belief of the doctrine of a trinity make me a more merciful and righteous man than I shall be if I did profess the contrary? Will it make me love and honour God better? Will it make the service which I render to his Divine Majesty a more reasonable service? And if on serious consideration you find it will not, then it is plain that the Unitarian faith, which denies a trinity of persons in the Godhead, is much to be preferred, since it is not perplexed with such contradictions to human understanding, but depends on more plain and noble evidences, and does also in all respects whatsoever effectually secure a good life; which, when all is done, is the very soul and

life of religion, and will stand by a man when *hypothetical unions*, and *mutual consciousness*, and *Somewhats*, will prove but poor things to depend upon for salvation.

There can be no danger of damnation for not assenting to such mysterious notions as men can at no tolerable rate understand, such as is that of the doctrine of a trinity, (*which makes the divine power of the Godhead to reside in three distinct persons, whose constitution is like that of a free state, rather than the more divine government of a single monarchy*) if in the mean time they believe heartily the plain doctrine revealed in God's word, and live up truly to the undoubted precepts which the christian religion commands, which I am certain does no where say, that unless ye believe that three persons are truly God, ye shall certainly be damned.

SALVATION AND THE BELIEF OF THE TRINITY NOT INCONSISTENT.

It is objected as dangerous to believe the doctrine of God's being but one in person, because we should hereby, as much as in us lies, exclude from salvation all those pious and just men who in former ages have lived and died in the belief of a trinity. I answer; the wisdom of the unitarian doctrine never was so uncharitable as to suppose this; yet doubtless the belief of a trinity must needs much lessen their future happiness, though

though not wholly debar them of salvation: And therefore to persist therein, after due admonition especially, is very imprudent and dangerous.

It is plain, that though those who believe a trinity do believe more than either God or Christ do require as necessary to salvation, yet together or therewith many persons do also believe all the chief fundamentals in religion that are requisite to save them; and therefore their hope and trust in God's mercy on one hand may out-balance their error on the other. If God winked at the ignorance of the virtuous gentiles, how can we imagine that he should not be gracious to the heedless and unwitting errors of the humble and contrite-hearted christian?

If any man (saith the apostle) build on the foundation bay, and straw, and stubble, that is, doctrine that will not stand the test of truth, he shall suffer loss; yet he himself shall be saved, but so as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 15. that is, with great difficulty he shall escape damnation. If God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no man could stand in judgment before him; as it is in Psalm clxiii. 2. and cxxx. 3. All salvation is of the free grace and mercy of God, who pardons iniquity, transgression and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 7. A good life will make great abatements upon the account of a bad faith; Mercy rejoiceth against judgment, Jam. ii. 13. and charity shall cover a multitude of sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8.

But though it is possible for a man to be saved in this faith, who otherwise has lived well, yet it will

doubtless much lessen his future happiness, for error of any kind is the fruitful parent of many mischiefs; it betrays us into absurdities, and involves us in many unwarrantable words and actions. As our faith is, so will our practice be apt to be, and consequently error in one respect or other will be apt to make mens lives less innocent; and the less innocent our actions are, the less doubtless will our reward hereafter be: For the eternal glories, *compared to that of the sun, and moon, and stars*, 1 Cor. xv. will be in proportion to the degrees of our christian perfection. They therefore whose religion is such only as will but just preserve them from damnation must not expect so large a share of the divine recompences, as by God's grace is due to the enlarged capacity of the more exactly knowing and undefiled soul.

But notwithstanding what has been said on the behalf of those otherwise good liver's who have not been ignorant of the truth merely out of malice and design, I add, that in case men of *false principles* are told plainly that they are in the wrong, and yet they still do obstinately persist therein, and refuse to consider seriously the arguments both of scripture and reason that are offered to convince them; I see not how in any case it is possible for such to be saved: for this is truly and plainly to reject the counsel of God, and to do despite to the spirit of grace.

BY

BY WHAT NATURE THE WORLD WAS
REDEEMED.

WHEN men have argued whatever they can about the necessity of Christ his being truly God, that so the sacrifice he offered might be of merit sufficient to answer the demands of God's most infinite justice; yet after all it must be acknowledged, that our peace was made with God, only by the holy life and death of an human person; for nothing that is truly God can die or shed blood, but *it is by blood, even the blood of a dying Jesus, that we are cleansed from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. And this his death for our redemption is an undeniable instance to prove, that his person was truly human.

Christ Jesus our lord was undoubtedly filled with the divine spirit, for in him dwelt the fulness of the godhead; but this did not make him God, any more than a believer shall be made God by *receiving of his fulness*, John i. 16. or by being *partaker of the divine nature* promised to such, 2 Pet. i. 4. It only fitted him for the work of redemption: he by that eminent inhabitation of the divine spirit became able to surmount all temptations to sin; and it was only the undefiled obedience of his life, even unto death, that made the sacrifice which he offered unto God acceptable.

The blood that was shed to manifest the intire obedience of Jesus unto God was no other than the blood of a most holy and excellent man; it was not the blood
of

of God, as some men rashly do affirm: On the cross he that thus died cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Now for him to be God that thus prayed to God, is, I think, impossible. Wherefore it is evident, that he who thus died was not a true deity; and yet it was by him that died that the world was redeemed; for which *bleſſed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath thus viſited and redeemed his people, and hath raiſed up a mighty ſalvation for us out of the houſe of his ſervant David,* Luke i. 68, 69.

A GENERAL RULE FOR ANSWERING ALL OBJECTIONS.

HAVING conſidered and answered the principal objections urged in favour of the doctrine which aſſerts Jeſus Chriſt to be truly God, in oppoſition to that of his being only *the man who is the mediator between God and men,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. or that which aſſerts, that none is God but the father of Chriſt, it will be needleſs to confute thoſe other little objections which ſtill remain; ſince when the chiefſt ſtrength that does uphold an error is overthrown, it is not in the power of ſome little props to maintain and ſupport it: nevertheleſs, leſt the minds of ſome ſhould thereby be perplexed, I here lay down one general rule, by which all other objections may be eaſily refuted, and that is this:

If any principle in religion be true by the greater and by the plainer number of evidences, it can never
be

be false by a few in number, or by them that are dark and doubtful.

If then the arguments to prove the true God to be only the father of Jesus Christ are more in number, and plainer to be understood, than those are which are objected in favour of the contrary, you need then only to reply thus, that the proofs that make for it are more both in number and weight, than those that are against it; and that therefore it would be unpardonable to suffer such trifles to unsettle and shake your faith.

Suppose a man objects against the doctrine of God's being but one in person this text, *Let us make man*, Gen. i. 26. and endeavour to prove from thence, that God is more than one in person, is it reasonable to suffer this to alter your judgment, when for that one passage, *us*, urged in favour of the belief of more persons than one, you have ten thousand that mention God to be but only one, in such terms as these, *I, thou, me, he, his?* And as for the terms of *we, they, them, &c.* they are not mentioned in scripture so much as once, as applied to God alone.

If every single objection that is started should be admitted to be of authority sufficient to invalidate the best and clearest proofs; or if every hard and doubtful passage in scripture were enough to overthrow all them that are clear and plain, then all true religion would soon be at end: for some plausible exceptions may be made against the chiefest and plainest truths in religion
otherwise

otherwise so many false and erroneous opinions would not have obtained that authority that they have in the world.

Indeed when we are told plainly, that we are in an error, and arguments truly considerable are at the same time offered to undeceive us, we ought then to suffer ourselves to be convinced: for if what is thus urged carries with it so much clear evidence as makes it undoubted, the changing then of our opinions will not only be reasonable but very honourable too, since nothing is more ignoble and base than to be a slave to error, from which not any thing in this world but truth can free us.

OF THE TRUE NOTION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IT is plain from the general analogy of true faith grounded on scripture-evidence, that the holy ghost is no distinct person subsisting of himself; for then it is clear, that our Lord could not be the son of him who is now called God the father, or the first person in the supposed trinity, since it is plain that the Virgin *Mary's* conception was occasioned by the *overshadowing of the Holy Ghost*, Luke i. 35. which all trinitarians acknowledge to be the third person, and not the first. It is expressly said, that *that which was conceived in her was of the holy ghost*, Mat. i. 20. And that *she was with child by him*, Mat. i. 18. Wherefore it is evident from these additional words, *and the power of the highest*
shall

shall overshadow thee, Luke i. 35. that the holy ghost is only that divine and invisible power of God, by which he works his will and pleasure in the world; and by consequence, that God, and the spirit of God, are no more two distinct persons than man and the spirit of man are; for to the one the other is compared in the sacred scripture, 1 Cor. ii. 11. And as the members of man's body do secretly and wonderfully obey the dictates of his will or mind, so, and much more so, do all creatures act, and are commanded by the Almighty power of God's divine and most wise will and pleasure.

When therefore all the elect people of God are said to be sanctified by the holy ghost, it must be understood of that new temper and inclination of mind which God by his divine and invisible power does work or cause in men. When he powerfully raises up in them holy thoughts, and excites in their minds new desires, he is then truly said to sanctify them by his spirit; and when men wilfully reject those motions to goodness, which God by his power does raise up in them, they are then truly said to resist, and grieve, and quench his spirit.

And whereas the spirit is said to receive, and to be sent, from whence some would infer its distinct personality: it is replied, that these are but improper expressions, such as are before noted to be spoken of God and Christ; they are words fitted to our dull apprehensions rather than to the true nature of the spirit

spirit itself, even as God is represented as having the actions and passions of a man, and to come down from Heaven, when yet we know that he is already every where, though our mortal eyes have not powers fitted to perceive him: He that filleth all things can no-ways be capable of moving out of his place. Such expressions as these therefore are plainly improper, and must not be understood literally, or as at first sight they seem to express.

The CONCLUSION

TO what has been said on this subject, I will only add this one solemn protestation, that as what I here offer is grounded on the dictates only of plain and positive scripture, and the most evident and perfect reason, as I humbly judge: So the design of this its publication is the alone glory of God Almighty, and the Church's peace, which no-ways can be established firmly but on the foundations of truth.

And though I am sensible the work is not performed with that exactness as to be in every part without reproof, yet I am satisfied that in the main I have therein managed the true cause of God and Religion.

Nevertheless, I have a secret distrust within me, that what I here offer will not be kindly received: for my best endeavours must not expect to find better success than did those of my blessed lord and master; who, though *he spake as never man spake*, and confirmed

firmed his doctrine with such miracles as did demonstrate him to be a teacher *sent of God*, yet was believed on but by a few: The praise of men was then generally much more beloved than the praise of God; *John* xii. 43.

And I doubt the case is still the same; men now seek their own and not the things of Jesus Christ, *Phil.* ii. 21. They that love riches will hardly run the hazard of losing any temporal preferment for the sake of truth. Others will be averse from acknowledging themselves in a mistake, who before have been honoured with the repute both of orthodox and learned men; and those who have been long prepossessed with the contrary persuasion will hardly relinquish it, though the best of reasons be offered to convince them of their error.

In short, the religion of mankind generally is but a self-righteousness, a law rather of their own making than of God's appointing. There are but very few that in all things do either live or believe as the gospel directs them: the whole world does for the most part prefer some senseless humour before sacred truth, and that immortal bliss to which it would conduct them.

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A SHORT VIEW OF THE
LIFE, SENTIMENTS, AND CHARACTER
OF
JOHN MORT,
IN AN ADDRESS TO THE
DISSENTERS OF ATHERTON;
AND IN A
SERMON

PREACHED IN NEW BENT CHAPEL, JANUARY 20, 1788.

BY H. TOULMIN.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
TWO FAMILY PRAYERS, BY MR. MORT.
THE SECOND EDITION CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

L O N D O N:
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TO THE SOCIETY OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS
IN ATHERTON*.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

SUCH is your regard for the memory of our late worthy partriarch, that I am persuaded it will be doing you a kindness, if I attempt to improve and perpetuate your acquaintance with his character. This, I flatter myself, I shall be able to do in some degree, as I have been obligingly favoured, by his much esteemed executor, with a perusal of some of his letters and other private papers. It will scarcely be in my power to add any thing to your knowlege of his family, or of the incidents of his life: on which account I should decline saying any thing relative to either, were it not probable that the following discourse will fall into the hands of a few friends, to whom some little intelligence upon these particulars might be agreeable.

Mr. John Mort was the last male representative of a respectable family, of Warton Hall, in this county. During the civil war in the reign of Charles I. his

A 2

family

* Atherton is a *township* in the parish of Leigh. Chowbent is a *village* in the township of Atherton.

family signalized itself by a steady attachment to the royal cause *. But upon the severities which, in the reign of Charles II. were exercised towards the dissenters, the conduct of Mr. Mort's grandfather afforded an example among many, of the tendency of

* An old writer, of the opposite party, in his account of the taking of Preston, says, " There were
 " divers slain on their side in the assault, and as if
 " men must have needs singled out some, of set purpose, for the slaughter, yea, the Manchesterians
 " themselves could scarcely have picked out fitter men,
 " (if they would any) for the sword, than those that
 " were slain in the fight; namely, the Major of Preston, by name Mr. Adam Mort (a man resolute
 " even to desperateness, in the cause he stood for,
 " who had oftentimes been heard to say, and swear
 " too ' *He would fire the town ere he would give it up,*
 " *and begin with his own house*') who fighting most
 " desperately, and having killed one of the colonel's
 " men in the fight, with push of pike, instantly after
 " lost his own life for it, together with his own son
 " also, a bold and desperate young malignant. Sir
 " Gilbert Houghton's brother, a captain of their
 " horse, and a desperate papist, was also slain." Vicars' Jehovah-Jireh, God in the Mount, or England's Parliamentary Chronicle, 4to. 1644, p. 269.

Some years after the above event (viz. Aug 25, 1650) a great uncle of Mr. Mort's, who fought by Sir Thomas Tyldesley, very narrowly escaped with his life near Wigan.

of persecution to increase the strength of the religious party against which it is employed. Filled with indignation at the conduct of the court, touched with pity towards the unfortunate nonconformists, who were not permitted to separate in peace from the church by law established ; the grandfather of our late friend, joined himself to the dissenters, and encouraged them to meet in his own house for the purpose of divine worship. The person who generally officiated as minister of the congregation assembled in Warton Hall, was Mr. James Woods,* one of those two thousand noble, conscientious clergymen, who, when the *Act of Uniformity* was passed, disdained to continue in a post, which they could hold no longer but by a prostitution of religious principle. This conduct of Mr. Mort's subjected him to some of those hardships which had excited his compassion towards the nonconformists, and he was, more than once, under the necessity of paying the fine, required by law, for suffering a conventicle in his house. Finding no reason to expect more just and humane treatment upon the accession of James II. the family began to direct their attention towards New England, the asylum of many of their brethren who, in their native country, had been robbed of the right of

A 3

worshipping

* The father of Mr. (commonly called General) Woods. He was the stated minister at the old chapel, upon Chowbent. He was son of Mr. Woods, of Ashton, in Mackerfield, who was also one of the ejected ministers, and died in 1688.

worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences.

A person was, therefore, sent to America to procure a settlement for them, and they were actually preparing to leave a country to which they were united by the most endearing ties, when the revolution of 1688, disclosed a bright and animating prospect to the friends of civil and religious liberty. Upon this the thoughts of removing to New England were dismissed: and, the *act of toleration* being passed, public religious service was regularly performed by Mr. Cheney in one of the apartments at Warton Hall. I find an honourable mention made of these hearty friends of liberty and religion in the life of Mr. Matthew Henry. Mr. Henry (says the writer of his life) contracted a very intimate acquaintance with Mr. James Woods, of Atherton, and with Mr. Mort's family, a family well known in that country for their constant regard to religion, and great respect to the faithful ministers of Christ, both in the present and last generation. Mr. Robert Mort*, father to him who is, at present, head of the family, was a gentleman, that feared God above many: he was one of the greatest examples of humility, charity, and primitive christianity, that our age has known: he was loved and honoured by all of what persuasion soever; the most profane and loose of all his neighbours, were hardly ever known to speak evil of him: he

* Grandfather of the late Mr. John Mort.

he greatly honoured God and religion, and his posterity are blessed. (Henry's Life, p. 196.)

The removal of the Mort family into Atherton, was of signal benefit to the society of dissenters belonging to this place, who at that time assembled for the purposes of religious worship in the old chapel upon Chowbent. Mr. Nathan Mort (the father of our late friend) was induced to make peculiar exertions in behalf of our dissenting society, by a strong personal attachment to the minister, Mr. Woods, junior, a man who will be long remembered in this neighbourhood, as a facetious companion, as a faithful servant of the lord Jesus, and as a firm friend to the liberties of his country.

It will be an article of intelligence to none of you, my brethren, that in the year 1715, alarmed at the progress of the pretender, he headed a body * composed

* The following is the exact copy of the letter which occasioned Mr. Woods' expedition. A slip of it being torn off; I have been forced to supply the words inclosed between the ()

"To the Rev. Mr. Woods, in Chowbent, for his Majesty's Service.

CHARLES WILLS.

"The officers here design to march at break of day for Preston, they have desired me) to raise what men I can to meet us at Preston to-morrow, so desire you to raise all the force you (can) I mean lusty young fellows

posed of all the hale and courageous men in his congregation, armed with the implements of husbandry, and marched them to Preston, where general Wills commissioned him to secure the possession of Walton Bridge: which brave and loyal conduct king George I. was pleased to acknowledge by an honourable memorial of his favour. Nor will you soon forget his active zeal in procuring assistance to erect a large, commodious chapel, when, in consequence of your steadiness to the cause of liberty, at the general election in the year 1722, the lord of the manor, warmed with that party-spirit which then burned in almost every bosom, deprived you of the place of worship in which you had been used to assemble: a measure, which in many respects proved highly advantageous to the interests of your society, but a measure, which, we persuade ourselves, his descendants of the present day, were it in their power, would have too much greatness of mind to imitate.

Among

fellows to draw up on C(uerden Green, to be there by 10 o'clock to bring w(ith them) what arms they have fitt for service, and (scythes) put in streight polls, and such as have not, to bring spades and bill hooks for Pionee(ring) with; pray go immediately all amongst y(our) neighbours and give this notice

I am

your very faithful

WIGAN 11th Nov. 1715

Servant

H. HOG(HTON)

Cuerden Green is about two miles from Preston in Wigan Road."

Among the late Mr. Mort's papers, I find an epitaph, which (as he was accustomed to do for most of those whom he peculiarly esteemed) he drew up soon after the death of Mr. Woods, and which, I doubt not, it will give you pleasure to peruse.

T H I S
IS INSCRIBED,
AS A TESTIMONY OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE
TO PERPETUATE THE MEMORY
O F
THE REV. JAMES WOODS.
ANIMATED WITH AN ARDENT ZEAL FOR THE
HAPPY CONSTITUTION OF HIS COUNTRY,
BY A BRAVE AND GENEROUS CONDUCT IN THE
YEAR MDCCXV
HE ACQUIRED AN HONOURABLE NAME AMONG
THE FRIENDS OF PUBLIC LIBERTY:
BY AN OPEN, CHEERFUL, AND UPRIGHT
CONVERSATION,
PROCEEDING FROM THE GOODNESS OF HIS HEART,
HE ATTRACTED THE ESTEEM OF ALL WHO
KNEW HIM.
AFTER SERVING THIS SOCIETY AS A CHRISTIAN
MINISTER,
WITH AFFECTION AND FIDELITY,
IN THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS AND PIETY, ABOVE
SIXTY YEARS,
HE FELL ASLEEP, FEBRUARY MDCCLIX.

The

The respect you entertain for the memory of this worthy person, will plead an apology for my having as yet made so little mention of Mr. Mort.

John Mort, the younger son of Mr. Nathan Mort, was born at Warton Hall in the parish of Dean, on March 30, 1702, new stile. When he was about ten years of age, his father removed into Atherton, and placed him under the care of Mr. Barrow the school-master of this place, intending that he should appear, in future life, in the character of a christian minister. The earnest wishes of his father, in this respect, were painfully disappointed; for the young man felt himself utterly averse from the idea of engaging in the profession for which he was intended; partly because he had no taste for some of the studies preparatory to it, and partly because his natural powers of speech, were by no means such as it is highly desirable that a public speaker should possess. But the hearts of his friends were so tenaciously fixed upon his appearing in the office of a teacher of religion, that he thought it necessary, in order to secure his future comfort, to remove to some distant situation. Upon opening his mind to his elder brother, it was determined, that he should retire to Nottingham. Thither he accordingly went in the nineteenth year of his age, and bound himself an apprentice to a stocking-weaver. At Nottingham Mr. Mort first imbibed a spirit of inquiry. Dr. Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, had excited the
attention

attention of many dissenters in that town, and was beginning to produce a considerable revolution in their religious sentiments. Though the doctrines which are termed orthodox, had been carefully instilled into the mind of Mr. Mort, he felt a disposition freely to investigate religious subjects. Fortunately a reading-society was established at Nottingham, of which he gladly became a member: and as those books were wisely admitted that canvassed religious questions (which are of all the most interesting and important) he was enabled to pursue his enquiries, at a trifling expense, and with the advantage of the company of those fellow-searchers after truth, who could either quicken his progress, by removing obstacles which, when alone, he might have been unable to surmount, or check that ardour for pushing forward, which sometimes carries a man into the mazes of error and scepticism.

Those who have a due sense of the moral dangers which beset a young man, full of spirits, glowing with youthful ardour, distant from the controuling eye of a parent, will acknowledge the hand of the kind providence of God, in the disposition which, at the most critical period of life, Mr. Mort discovered for the improvement of his mind, and in his being able to connect himself, whilst among strangers, with a set of serious companions. So sensible was he of the advantages which he derived from being at Nottingham, that he retained an uncommon partiality
for

for that place to the latest period of his life. He could scarcely give a plainer proof of the high opinion he had of such associations for reading as he was there a member of, than by being instrumental, as he was fifty years ago, in establishing a book society in this village, and by viewing with the greatest pleasure the more recent exertions for extending christian knowledge, which have been made by a person, who, in the humbler department, assists in conducting your public religious services; and to whom, you will permit me to say, I think, the cause of free enquiry, is under considerable obligations.

Mr. Mort continued at Nottingham about three years and a half. Upon his return to Atherton, he united with his brother, in carrying on the sustian business, preserving, in mercantile transactions, the ingenuous simplicity of the christian, and maintaining to the last, amidst all the allurements of interest, a character strictly irreproachable.

With respect to Mr. Mort's views of the doctrines of the gospel, at this period; it does not appear to what extent he had proceeded in doubting of the truth of those religious tenets, which he afterwards rejected as corruptions of christianity. That the *Athanasian* * doctrine of the Trinity, was no longer considered

* To those of you who are not acquainted with the Athanasian creed, the following passages will be a curiosity. " There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. — The
" Father

considered by him as a doctrine of the scriptures, is a point which, I conceive, will not admit of any doubt. He had probably made up his mind, as we term it, in favour of the opinion, that the lord Jesus, though a creature, was greatly superior to men and angels, and existed before the creation of the world. Satisfied with this idea of our lord's person; it is likely that he gave no attention to the question concerning his pre-existence: and his mind was less at liberty to pursue inquiries of this nature, in consequence of his being much engaged for many years in the study of history, of which, I am informed, he possessed a very extensive knowledge. He was, however, led to reconsider his notion of our lord's person, in a later period of his life, by the writings of Mr. Paul Cardale, and by some articles in the Theological Repository, upon, what is called, the socinian doctrine. His thoughts were directed to those publications, by some of his particular acquaintance whom he held in great esteem, and whose friendly debates

" Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the
 " Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three
 " Almightyies, but one Almighty. So the Father is
 " God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God;
 " and yet there are not three Gods but one God.—
 " This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man be-
 " lieve faithfully, HE CANNOT BE SAVED." So says
 the ingenious author of *the Creed of Saint Athanasius*.

debates upon the subject discussed in them, he often heard with silent, but thoughtful attention. After maturely considering the arguments advanced both in conversation and in print, against the opinion that our great master existed before he was born of Mary, he embraced the doctrine which was held by the general body of believers in the apostolic age, and in the age immediately succeeding it *, viz. that the lord Jesus was properly a human being, "a man approved of God †," but, like all other creatures, dependant upon God for every thing, so that "of himself he could do nothing ‡." The publications which he had seen upon the subject, afforded, he thought, a satisfactory explanation of those few texts of scripture in which our lord speaks of himself as "coming down from heaven ||," and of those which may seem to intimate that he had a being before he appeared in this world.

He took peculiar pleasure in perusing the productions of Dr. Priestley, a writer from whose various works (says a very capable judge) above those of any other in our own country, the rising generation might reap the greatest advantage, both in respect of useful know-

* Of this see Priestley's History of Early Opinions concerning Christ.

† Acts ii. 22.

‡ John v. 19. and 30.

|| See the Sequel to an Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, by T. Lindsey, A.M.

knowledge and virtuous improvement*. Four discourses of Dr. Lardner's, published since his death by one possessed of the amiable spirit of a Lardner, Mr. Wiche, of Maidstone, entitled, "Two Schemes of a Trinity considered, and the divine Unity asserted," gave much satisfaction to Mr. Mort: but what especially leads me to mention them, in this place, is that I have been informed, upon very good authority, that they established your late excellent minister, Mr. Mercer, in the belief that our lord was properly a man, and had no existence, before he was born in the land of Judea, about eighteen hundred years ago. These examples of a mind ingenuous, and free to embrace the truth, at a period of life when most men are becoming more and more confirmed in their old habits of thinking, are truly worthy of our admiration, though it may be feared that they are too great to be generally imitated by us.

The sentiments which Mr. Mort entertained upon other religious questions, were widely different from those, which, in the present age, are esteemed orthodox. He was firmly persuaded, that the scriptures nowhere represent the *death of Jesus*, as designed to appease the wrath or to satisfy the justice of that Being, whose nature is love and goodness itself, and who, ages before our lord was born, was worshipped by

B 2

his

* See a most valuable piece entitled, *Vindiciæ Priest-
lianae*: An address to the students of Oxford and Cam-
bridge, by T. Lindsey, A.M.

his servants, as “ a God ready to pardon, gracious
 “ and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kind-
 “ nefs *.” The cloud by which his education
 had darkened those views of the divine character
 which are presented in the gospel, was greatly dis-
 persed upon his perusal of a small but very valuable
 tract, entitled, “ Second Thoughts on the Death and
 Sufferings of Christ.” He also often spoke in terms
 of the highest approbation of Mr. Graham’s Fourteen
 Letters on the atonement. “ Mr. Graham has said
 “ enough (observes Mr. Mort, in a letter to a friend)
 “ totally to bury the orthodox notion of atonement,
 “ which so much dishonoured and abused the Al-
 “ mighty, and disgraced the gospel.”

Having had frequent conversations with the late
 Dr. Taylor of Warrington, upon the doctrine of the
 scriptures concerning the *state of man between death
 and the resurrection*; he was led to believe, that there
 is no just ground for the opinion, that the soul exists
 in happiness or misery whilst the body is mouldering
 in the grave. The principal consideration which
 convinced him that the whole man dies at once, was
 that Jesus and his apostles always direct our attention to
 the *resurrection* *, which, he thought, they would never
 have done, had they believed that good men would
 be

* Nehem. ix. 17.

† See Matt. xiii. 40, 41. Luke xiv. 14. † Thess.
 iv. 13, &c. Tit. ii. 13. 1 Pet. iv. 13.

be admitted into heaven, perhaps thousands of years before that resurrection will take place.

It is known, I doubt not, to many of you, my friends, that respecting the *rite of baptism*, Mr. Mort had nearly the same ideas as those, which were maintained two hundred years ago by that excellent person Faustus Socinus, and which have been more recently defended by Mr. Emlyn, and Mr. Wakefield. He thought that the lord Jesus never intended that baptism should be practised by his disciples in future ages: though, I conceive, he saw a propriety and utility in parents' requesting some christian friend or minister to unite with them in prayer to almighty God, upon the birth of a child, as well as upon any other interesting event.

His ideas of the nature and design of that particular method of preserving a remembrance of Jesus, which we call the *Lord's Supper*, are sufficiently apparent in the following address which you recollect he printed upon a sheet of paper and dispersed among you.

A free and affectionate Address to all those professing Christians, particularly the Protestant Dissenters, that do not communicate at the Lord's Supper, but run away, as if they thought it dangerous, or disagreeable, to be good. By a Lover of pure Christianity, unadulterated with human Systems.

I AM apt to think that this neglect proceeds from a false notion of the nature of this institution: but

a careful attention to the history of it, by the apostles and evangelists, would do more to give you a right understanding, and settle your minds about it, than reading whole volumes on the subject. There, you find our saviour in the most affecting discourses with his disciples, when going to leave them for a while, cheering them with the promise that he would send them a comforter, and that he would come again to receive them : that where he was, they might be. He desired them in the most friendly manner to meet at certain times, to eat and drink together, in thankful remembrance of him, until he came again to receive them.

What can be more plain, natural, and rational, than this friendly desire at parting ? You profess yourselves christians, and would be displeased with any one for denying that you are : but can you esteem yourselves worthy and faithful disciples of Christ, whilst you deliberately refuse to shew him this respect, so affectionately desired ? Your saviour cannot be pleased with you : for when Mary, out of her great respect to him, had poured on his head that costly ointment, he shewed his displeasure at those that blamed her *, and said, that this instance of respect to him should

* Probably on account of the selfish and wicked disposition, which led Judas to censure Mary, and not because he was solicitous to receive extraordinary personal attention. See *John* xii. 6.

should be known, wherever his gospel should be preached.

Allow me to expostulate with you further. Put yourselves into a case something analogous. Had you by infinite toil and suffering saved a certain number from poverty, misery, and death, you could not but expect their gratitude: and you certainly would resent it, if, contrary to your desire, they had refused to meet at certain times, to testify their grateful remembrance of you their saviour. Shew, then, this respect to your saviour: he will be pleased, and it will be your for profit. Your social dispositions will be improved. At this meeting all the communicants will be united together in love as one soul: for can it be possible they should disobey the parting command of their saviour, so often repeated? You will at that time be employed, not only in contemplating the love of the Father, and the generous, unparalleled love and condescension of the son; but you will naturally be refreshing your memory with considering the character of your saviour, his sufferings, example, teachings, and exhortations. You will learn what temper and disposition pleases him most, by considering the humane, compassionate, benevolent temper of the apostle John, which raised him to the honour of being the favourite of our lord. I should think it almost impossible but these meditations must inspire you with the firmest resolutions to acquire this happy temper.—Can you think it a matter of indifference

ference at the great day of retribution, to be owned by the impartial judge, and rewarded as his favourites before angels and men?

You will, probably, be glad to read Mr. Mort's own account of his sentiments, upon other points, as well as upon the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. It gives me pleasure, that it is in some measure, in my power to gratify you in this desire.

In a paper I have before me, this worthy person speaks of himself in the following manner. " I was
 " very carefully brought up in the religion of the
 " Westminster assembly of divines. But when I
 " arrived at a mature age, and judged for myself,
 " (after a diligent endeavour to understand the New
 " Testament, making a proper use of what helps I
 " could meet with, for that end) I found that christi-
 " anity was very different from the human system
 " taught in the Assembly's Catechism. I therefore
 " renounced the latter and embraced the former.
 " After living about fifty years (for I am now only a
 " few weeks short of eighty-three) I am perfectly
 " satisfied with my choice, and for some years have
 " thought that the fidelity I owe to my saviour,
 " obliges me to use my best abilities to promote pure
 " christianity, unadulterated with human systems."

What Mr. Mort meant by pure christianity, you will learn from the following contrast, which many of you, probably, have already seen. It is inserted here, merely because it gives one view of Mr. Mort's
 religious

religious sentiments. The references which are added under each article, will assist you in forming some judgment how far it contains a just representation of the doctrine of the Assembly's Catechism, and of the christian scriptures, though, you will permit me to observe, that the doctrine of the New Testament is, in my opinion, to be sought rather in the general strain and spirit of it, than in a few detached passages.

“ The difference of the religion of the assembly of divines at Westminster, from that of Jesus Christ, seems to be great; as *contrasted* in the *columns* underneath. That of the assembly of divines is represented on the left; and that of Jesus Christ on the right column; with respect to *authority, doctrine, and character.*

AUTHORITY.

Derived from fallible and prejudiced men.

DOCTRINES.

The Deity split into three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: all equal in power and glory. (Assemb. shorter Catechism: An. 6.)

AUTHORITY.

Christ and his apostles were commissioned by the Almighty, to be the light of the world, to shew the true way to eternal life and happiness. They were approved by God, by a voice from heaven, by miracles, by wonders, and signs.

DOCTRINES.

One God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. The Father greater than the Son. The Son obedient to the Father in all things, even to death. 1. Cor. viii. 6. xi. 3. John xiv. 28. John v. 30. John x. 17.

Children.

Children guilty of Adam's sin, and liable to eternal punishment. (An. 16---19.)

The innocent punished for the guilty. Christ suffering the wrath of God for a time. (An. 25 and 27.)

A certain number predestinated to salvation. All the rest left to perish. (An. 20.)

Personal righteousness availeth nothing for a man's justification, unless he believe that another person's righteousness shall be imputed to him. Thus depreciating the moral character. (An. 33.)

Children blessed by Jesus Christ; and his followers warmly exhorted to be like them in innocence, who are the peculiar care of angels. Of such is the kingdom of Heaven. Mark x. 13---6. Luke xviii. 16. 17. Matt. xviii. 3.

God the Father, well pleased with his Son, loved him because he laid down his life. John x. 17. John xvii. 24, 5. Phil. ii.* 8---14. Heb. xii. 2.

All, without exception, that repent and believe, fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted and saved. Those that do good, are merciful and compassionate, will most certainly enter the joy of their Lord. Acts. x. 35. Matt. xxvi. 31, to the end. 1 John ii. 2. iv. 14.

He that doth righteousness, is righteous. They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in the firmament. Our saviour himself doing the greatest honour to moral excellence, by admitting into his most intimate favour and friendship, the apostle who excelled the others in the moral virtues: Possibly on this account exempting him from the most severe trials, and revealing to him the knowledge of the most important future events. 1 John iii. 7. Dan. xii. 3. John xix. 26.

CHARACTER

* The words (ver. 6.) rendered "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," are translated more agreeably to the general tenor of scripture, by many learned men; "thought not the being like a God a thing to be greedily seized by him."

CHARACTER.

Of the followers of the
assembly of divines.

Persecutors.*

CHARACTER.

Of the followers of Jesus
Christ.

Persecuted-----As, Mr.
Biddle, Mr. Emlyn, Mr.
Peirce, Professor Simpson,
&c. &c. for their faithful ad-
herence to the important
truths of christianity."

Among the friends to whom Mr. Mort sent the above contrast of the calvinistical doctrines, with those which he esteemed to be the doctrines of the christian scriptures, was a worthy person whose character and mental attainments are an honour to his lowly station. I need not apologize to you for introducing a letter from him to Mr. Mort, upon the occasion.

" S I R,

Heaton, Dec. 21, 1782.

I RECEIVED yours with a paper you sent me. I esteem it a very particular favour. It is an honour I could not have expected. I am also much obliged to some friend or friends for giving you so favourable an idea of my character.

I perused your paper with a great deal of pleasure. The point of view, in which you have placed the difference between the religion of the divines at Westminster and that of Jesus Christ is very striking. Though I have long been convinced that those doc-
trines

* Yet there are many of them who have suffered for righteousness sake; more, indeed, in these latter ages, than of Unitarian Christians; but not for their attachment to orthodoxy, as they have never been persecuted on that account.

doctrines held by the Westminster divines are not only inconsistent with reason and our best notions of the perfections and character of the Divine Being, but are also contrary to what our saviour and his apostles taught in the New Testament; yet I cannot say, that I had ever contrasted them in my own mind in so plain and obvious a manner." "The difference of character seems to be the natural result of the difference of doctrines. For as the religion of Jesus leads men to be meek and humble, candid and charitable, merciful, compassionate, and forgiving, and to do good to all; the doctrines of the Westminster divines (by representing God as partial, arbitrary, cruel, unjust, punishing the innocent for the guilty, electing some to everlasting life, without any regard to moral character, and dooming the rest to everlasting punishment; these doctrines) lead many who entertain them to a kind of presumption and spiritual pride, esteeming themselves the elect of God, and the favourites of heaven, censuring and condemning all who differ from them as reprobates and the enemies of God, shutting up their bowels of compassion from them, and even sometimes thinking that they render God service by persecuting and afflicting them.

These being some, among many, of the unhappy effects of embracing the doctrines of the Assembly of Divines, or calvinism: it will be the wish of every liberal-minded, benevolent man, who is a sincere friend to the best interests of mankind, that it were in
his

his power to do something towards opening the eyes of such deluded, but yet well meaning persons. But the prospect of success, I fear, seems not to be very promising. For whilst such persons are generally so full of themselves, as to look on all, who differ from them, as being in the wrong, and they themselves only in the right; whilst they declare, that common sense is a fool, and natural reason blind and erroneous; whilst they consider the workings of their own imaginations and fancies, as divine inspirations, whilst they entertain such unworthy notions of the Divine Being, and esteem moral excellence as of no value; what can be expected from them? what arguments can be made use of to convince them? Indeed the method, which you have pointed out, appears to be a likely means of convincing every one, who is inclined to consider such subjects with any degree of coolness and moderation. More especially is it adapted to have the happiest effects upon the minds of such as are in the earlier part of life, who are not yet wedded to any particular system, but have their minds open to receive the truth." "Something of the like kind with yours, but on a different subject, has been done some time since in the introduction to a pamphlet entitled, 'A Free and Serious Address to the Christian Laity, &c.*' wherein the object of worship of the holy scriptures, is contrasted with the object of worship of the Church of England,

C

and

* By Joshua Toulmin, A. M.

and of some dissenters. The author of the Address, thinks it the duty of those who embrace unitarian sentiments, to separate themselves from the trinitarian worship, and form distinct societies.

In the London Evening Post, of the 26th—28th of November last, we have an account that the week before ‘the Rev. Dr. Disney of Swinderby in Lincolnshire, and formerly of Peter House, Cambridge, resigned all his ecclesiastical preferments, on account of his objections to the trinitarian forms of worship in the established church.’ Another noble instance of integrity, firmness, and resolution in the cause of truth and conscience, to be added to the venerable list of a Lindsey, a Jebb, an Evanston, a Robertson, &c. &c.

I am afraid I have trespassed much on your patience by the length of this. I have no apology to make but the reliance I have on your generous indulgence and candour. I know of nothing that should have hindered me from doing myself the honour and pleasure of seeing you, but a strong sense of the obligations I am under of attention to one of the best of mothers now grown almost helpless, through the infirmities of old age and sickness. If I can possibly make it convenient, I intend to come to see you, some time ere it be very long. In the mean time I remain

Your much obliged friend and

humble servant,

JAMES KAY.”

Though our late friend, and the worthy person whose valuable letter I have in part transcribed, entertained such serious and alarming apprehensions of the pernicious tendency of the orthodox or calvinistical doctrines; yet you will not imagine, that they concluded, that every person who held those doctrines must have been destitute of moral worth and excellence. Those leading principles of christianity, which are embraced by every serious believer in Jesus, are frequently, one would hope generally, powerful enough to counteract the mischievous influence of any set of speculative opinions. Besides, truly good persons, shutting their eyes to the dark side of their religious system, will naturally endeavour to find out some practical use in every supposed truth: they will impress it upon the minds of their children, and thus, those very doctrines, which one should think would poison a man's disposition, have really a considerable share in forming and perfecting his religious character. Genuine charity should also teach us to believe, that almighty God will never condemn men for their errors in religious worship, when they are accompanied with a good heart, and spring from a pure desire of serving him according to the best of their abilities.

"It is my opinion," says Mr. Mort, "that the Father of our lord Jesus Christ is the one supreme God, that he only is to be worshipped, and that (as a great writer expresses himself) to assert, that the supreme Creator of all things, hath in these last ages

“ of our world been made one of his own creatures
 “ is blaspheming the eternal Deity. It is also my
 “ opinion that worshipping a plurality of gods is idol-
 “ atry. But notwithstanding this, I have so much
 “ charity for those mistaken worshippers, as to believe
 “ that their good intention will be accepted.”

But though Mr. Mort entertained such just and liberal sentiments concerning those who, believing it to be their duty, worship Jesus, the highly favoured of God; yet you know, my friends, that he himself never paid religious adoration to any but the one only living Jehovah, nor, by his presence, countenanced the devotions of a church which besides the Father of our lord Jesus Christ, prays to a God the son, and and a god the holy ghost. To worship the “man Christ Jesus,”* he thought would be for him to be guilty of idolatry. He rejoiced therefore in seeing unitarians act consistently with their principles, and often spoke with rapture of those worthy persons, who voluntarily resigned their posts of honour and profits in the established church, that they might be no longer compelled to worship any other than the only true God. I also find him mentioning with much pleasure, Mr. Christie, a merchant of Montrose, in Scotland, who, in the year 1781, with a society of professed unitarians, withdrew from the trinitarian worship of the Church of Scotland, and has since that time regularly conducted the public services of religion,

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

gion; agreeably, as he conceives, to the precepts and examples of Jesus and his apostles. " This most
 " learned and most excellent christian (says Mr. M.)
 " has published his case, and several of his own ser-
 " mons, proving that the Father of our lord Jesus
 " Christ is the one supreme God, and that he only is
 " to be worshipped, which carries irresistible con-
 " viction to every unprejudiced reader."*

In the copy of a letter to a friend, dated May 22, 1786, which accompanied a little piece respecting Mr. Elwal, who was tried at the Stafford assize in the year 1726, for maintaining the doctrine of the divine unity, Mr. Mort remarks, " that a plain, honest,
 " illiterate man, about fifty or sixty years ago, should,
 " by studying the meaning of the New Testament,
 " have a truer knowlege of religion and christianity,
 " than almost any one, at that time, of the learned
 " bishops and clergy of the church of England, or
 " of the learned dissenters, how astonishing ! That
 " this honest cutler, should, at the Stafford assize,
 " vindicate his cause without the help of counsel,
 " and prove so clearly that important truth, of the
 " Father of our lord Jesus Christ being the one, only,
 supreme

* See a farther account of the unitarian christians in North Britain, in a most entertaining and improving work, entitled, *An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship, from the Reformation to our own Times.* By Theophilus Lindsey, A.M.

“supreme God, so as to baffle and confound the
 “learned clergy his prosecutors, how astonishing!
 “how pleasing!”

You may perceive how much the heart of our venerable friend was set upon doing all he could to overturn the calvinistical system, from a letter which, just before his death, he sent to our brethren at Warton, with the view of leading them to inquire into the truth of those doctrines which he looked upon as corruptions of christianity.

“*To the MEMBERS of the WARTON Religious Society.*

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

I doubt not but you will receive this address with candour, which is dictated with a sincere wish for your welfare. You have been brought up in that system of religion called orthodox, in which there now appear to be, as is made evident to impartial, unprejudiced inquirers, some dangerous errors, that have a bad tendency. One is, making the son equal to the Father; which is a direct breach of the first commandment, and is contrary to what our saviour always said of himself. Another very dangerous error, is, that God will not pardon the sinner, upon his repentance and amendment, without a substitute, suffering in his stead; which is expressly contrary to what is asserted both in the Old and New Testament. Another error, is, that some are predestinated to be
 saved

saved, the rest left to perish. Another error is, that our obedience and goodness, is of no avail, but another's must be accepted instead.

These errors originated at Rome,* and have been forced on men's consciences by persecution; which character is the antichrist prophesied by the apostles Paul and John, and not the *Pope* of Rome, but a *Character*.

Never forget what is most pleasing to God, and our saviour, which is an humble, humane, compassionate, benevolent temper. This temper made the apostle John our saviour's favourite.

I think the above truths are self-evident, and need no elaborate reasoning to prove them. The contrary do much harm, as they give a false notion of the moral attributes of the Deity."

Mr. Mort's zeal against the distinguishing tenets of orthodox christians, was more warm and determined, than probably it would otherwise have been, in consequence of a persuasion, that they are an insurmountable obstacle to the conversion of serious unbelievers of every denomination. "Whilst the jews and deists (says he) take the system of religion taught in the Assembly's Catechism, for christianity, it is almost impossible they should be christians." He, therefore, thought that it clearly appeared to be the duty of rational christians, "to use their utmost endeavours

* See an History of the Corruptions of Christianity, by J. Priestley, LL.D.

endeavours to advance the interests of pure, uncorrupted christianity. They must see their obligation to do this, as they profess to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and are daily praying, that his kingdom may come and his will be done. They must, also, necessarily rejoice in beholding the pillars of antichristian establishments already shaking, and the supporters of them trembling, and must indulge pleasing hopes, that the time is not very far distant, when they shall fall, and agreeably to prophecy, an universal reformation in the minds and manners of men take place."

There is a small slip of paper, upon which Mr. Mort has written, "Underneath this stone lies John Mort; who learned his religion from the New Testament, and not from corrupt human systems. He thought it his duty to do his utmost, to root out or lessen the mischievous effects of that antichristian religion called calvinism."

You have seen in what light our late friend viewed the doctrines of the church of England. But whilst he rejected her creed, and thought her chargeable with idolatry in her devotions; he approved of her *mode* of worship in preference to that of the dissenters. In a letter to a very worthy and respectable person, with whose activity in introducing a printed form of prayer into the religious services of the society with which he was connected, Mr. Mort was well acquainted, he thus speaks of himself. "I am one of those very few dissenters,

dissenters, who for many years have been displeased with the almost universal prejudice of even those called rational dissenters, against the use of liturgies in public worship. No one more rejoiced when I first heard, some years ago, of your generous design to introduce that mode of worship."

As many of you my friends, are probably but little acquainted with the question concerning the propriety of printed forms of prayer, and may wonder upon what principles Mr. Mort could approve of a mode of worship so little adopted by dissenters; you will be pleased with an extract or two from a letter upon the subject, in answer to that just mentioned.

"Did not observation and experience evince, how much the generality of mankind are led by custom and habit, more than by reason and reflection; one would wonder at the aversion which many amongst the rational dissenters have entertained to the use of a liturgy in public worship, more especially as with the use of it, an opportunity of extempore or free prayer being admitted, the peculiar advantages of both might be united. In this view, I cannot but wish the practice more general; I mean only amongst those whose minds are sufficiently enlarged to concur in declining the introduction of any disputable opinion, desiring to retain nothing, but what any candid and sincere christian may join in the use of.

Though I think the use of a liturgy preferable to the present mode of worship among dissenters; yet I
esteem

esteem it a happy circumstance that it has not in times past obtained amongst them, as it might have been the means of preserving many erroneous notions and absurd phrases, which are now gradually sinking into oblivion: but wherever christianity is understood and professed in its genuine simplicity;* there one cannot but wish, that the public offices of devotion, might be rendered stable and permanent, as a lasting barrier against the encroachments of superstition and enthusiasm.

The use of responses in public worship, is, I think a delightful and animating part, tending to engage the attention of the people, and rendering the service more social, than where one person acts a solitary part.

It is not my intention to enlarge on the comparative merit of the two different modes, as I recollect I am writing to one, who has sufficiently considered the subject. But I would beg leave to mention another circumstance, wherein the peculiar advantage and expediency, of a liturgy or pre-composed form, must, I think, be generally acknowledged. In some places, the number of dissenters is too small to support a constant

* But since it is impossible to know with certainty when christianity is professed in its genuine simplicity; would it not be wise in every society when adopting a liturgy, to invest a number of persons with the power of revising and correcting it, whenever they should think it expedient?

stant minister; they have only service amongst them occasionally, or, perhaps, once a month: at other times they do not meet, for want of a suitable person to lead their devotions in the present mode: some therefore stay at home: others go to the established church, which occasional conformity tends, by degrees, to render them indifferent to the principles of their dissent, and thus has led many families to conform entirely: this might probably be prevented, and their meetings kept up by the use of a form, which any persons of moral conduct, and moderate abilities, might read in a manner, at least edifying, though not with the propriety of superior talents *."

So averse was Mr. Mort from extempore prayer, that, as I am informed, he always made use of a form in conducting family worship. You will be pleased with those specimens of his devotional spirit, which I shall transcribe for the use of any who may think proper to adopt them, in performing the daily religious services of their families. How nearly he agreed in sentiment with the writer of the letter just quoted, respecting the peculiar propriety of forms of prayer being adopted by societies, which have no stated minister, you will see from the following address. It was written about the year 1774.

" It

* Some valuable observations on Liturgies may be seen, in an excellent work entitled, " The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, by W. Paley, M.A. Archdeacon of Carlisle."

“ It is humbly proposed to the consideration of all
 “ rational dissenters, whether if the following plan of
 “ rules and orders, or others of the like nature, were
 “ adopted and observed by their religious societies;
 “ it would not tend greatly to improve the particular
 “ members of them, in useful knowledge, in amiable
 “ dispositions, and in the practice of the christian
 “ virtues.

“ If they have no stated minister *; let those mem-
 “ bers, who are of the best character and abilities,
 “ undertake

* “ For the apprehension of the necessity of a stand-
 “ ing ministry, for the purpose of conducting public
 “ worship in christian assemblies, seems to be a mistake,
 “ and may have been one reason of the dissolution of
 “ some dissenting societies, when not able to maintain
 “ a minister.

“ It is written (says Tertullian, who lived sixteen
 “ hundred years ago) *He hath made us kings and priests*
 “ *to God and his Father.* The distinction between
 “ clergy and laity was made by the church, and ap-
 “ proved by the bench of elders. So that where there is
 “ none of that bench, you yourself both offer and
 “ baptize, and are your own priest; nay where there
 “ are three, they make a church, though they are lay-
 “ men. For every man lives by his own faith; nor
 “ is there any acceptance of persons with God.
 “ Therefore if you have the right of priesthood in
 “ yourself, you must have a right to exercise your
 “ priesthood, when it is necessary.” Quoted by Gro-
 “ tius in a Tract, printed in ‘ A Defence of the Rights
 of the Christian church, 1709,’ p. 180.

“ undertake the services, usually allotted to ministers,
 “ of leading the devotions of the assembly in prayer,
 “ and of reading the scriptures, together with such
 “ lectures, as are best calculated to give them a right
 “ understanding of natural and revealed religion, and
 “ which best tend to enforce the practice of every
 “ christian duty. It is presumed that there might be
 “ found some in every, or at least most christian
 “ societies, willing to undertake this service ; as with
 “ the help of written forms of prayer, and the many
 “ useful discourses now in print, no uncommon abili-
 “ ties are necessary for the undertaking. All of them
 “ would cheerfully concur in their endeavours to im-
 “ prove, as much as possible, that important and de-
 “ lightful part of religious worship, the singing of
 “ God’s praise.

“ In general : let there be a warm and sincere
 “ zeal in all the members, to promote, as far as in
 “ their power, the happiness of every particular mem-
 “ ber of the society, more especially his spiritual
 “ welfare. Those who are in poverty and distress
 “ should be relieved by those in more affluent cir-
 “ cumstances, as nearly as can be, proportionably
 “ to the several abilities of the latter.

“ Harmony of affections, and the sincerest friend-
 “ ship, should be carefully cultivated and maintained
 “ among all the members, though differing in their
 “ opinions, about controverted points of divinity.

D

“ Let

" Let the members of the society take every pro-
 " per opportunity to be well acquainted with one
 " another. Let the more knowing take pleasure in
 " communicating knowlege, in the most condescend-
 " ing, acceptable way, to the more ignorant. Let
 " the rich be far from assuming a haughty air, and
 " learn that meek, that humble spirit, which will
 " endear them to all their fellow members of inferior
 " rank. It would not be amiss, if these were at
 " certain times admitted to their tables. It is very
 " practicable to render table conversation very im-
 " proving as well as pleasant. By such behaviour,
 " their warmest affections and best wishes will be
 " gained. A grateful, teachable disposition, a sober
 " and diligent conduct will be the consequence.

" With regard to all other denominations of
 " christians; let every member be possessed of the
 " most catholic principles, and behave towards them
 " in the most charitable and generous manner.

" Let all the members show their affection to
 " Christ, their love to one another; their gratitude
 " to God for the gospel, by cheerfully embracing the
 " stated opportunities, weekly or monthly, of join-
 " ing with their fellow-christians in celebrating the
 " lord's supper: at that time, more especially con-
 " templating the character, teachings, sufferings,
 " condescension and love of their great master.

" Let all the members, approving these rules and
 " heartily consenting to the practice, give in their
 " names;

“ names ; by which means they would all be known
 “ to one another.

“ Vicious and refractory members, after all prudent methods have been taken to reclaim them,
 “ should have their names erased.

“ Every well-disposed person, after duly considering these rules and orders, desiring to become a
 “ member, should be admitted, and subscribe his
 “ name accordingly.

“ A church, though small, thus constituted and
 “ moulded, as it were, into one soul, bearing one
 “ another's burdens, considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works ; how lovely,
 “ how beautiful the idea !”

You, my friends, can all bear testimony that Mr. Mort himself uniformly paid the strictest attention to the rules which you find he had laid down. You know, for you have often told me, how kind he was to all, how attentive to the wants of the poor, how mindful of your spiritual welfare. Having a perfect acquaintance with the congregation, he frequently, you recollect, expressed his concern to you, when he observed that your seats in the chapel were empty, on that day in the week, which all confess is best spent in gaining religious knowledge, and in cultivating a christian temper. His anxiety for your continuing to improve in an amiable and heavenly frame of mind, would not permit him to quit the world, without leaving behind him that token of his affection, which

you will meet with in the following discourse. In that, as well as in some observations which have already occurred, you will perceive what an impression was made upon his mind by a consideration of the character of the apostle John. But the following anecdote shows it more strikingly. A few days after he was first impressed by meditating upon the humane temper of the bosom friend of Christ, as he was riding briskly from Manchester, intent upon being home by tea-time, he was suddenly stopped by a poor woman, who begged him to give her something. He was vexed at being detained, and would not hear her. But as he lay on his bed in the night, and reflected upon what had passed in the day: his heart smote him for this conduct, and he could not be easy, till he had, in the morning, walked upwards of two miles to see her and give her some little relief. He himself thought that he should not have done this a few years before.

That practice of his at your social meetings, which I have some times heard you mention, was truly characteristic of the amiable temper of his mind. When others had given as a toast the lord of the manor, or some other great person, to whom they were attached by interest, it was common with him to give '*the POOR of Atherton*:' reminding you by these means of the nobler ties which should bind man to man. How happy is it, when even the employments of our more unbended hours, become *mementos* of our duty,
and

and are made to cherish the most generous and benevolent affections.

It was from a similar regard to your improvement that he was so earnest in keeping up the conversation club, which he had introduced. The topics which were discussed at these meetings, were generally such as had an useful tendency. They brought together upon the same footing, persons of different descriptions. They tended to remove every unnecessary distinction between the master and the servant: and the characters of both were mutually improved by such friendly communications. It is a black stain upon the complexion of the present times, that a club which had subsisted half a century, which had neither injured, nor thought of injuring any one, which was composed of some of the most respectable persons in the neighbourhood, which hath always been conducted with decorum, with peace, and with harmony, should lately * have been broken up, in consequence of threat that the publicans who suffered them to meet any longer in their houses, should be deprived of their licences.

You, my friends, are well acquainted with the life of this good man, and it is not necessary in order to confirm you in the best opinion of him, that I should mention any more instances of the excellence of his heart. In the following extract from a letter † which

D 3

he

* In January, 1793.

† Written in July 1786.

he addressed to a particular friend * in Scotland, you will perceive that Mr. Mort drew a perfect likeness of himself, in his picture of a genuine christian.

“ But, dear madam, why should you alarm us
 “ with fears of never meeting again in this world.
 “ Be so good to indulge us with the hope of meeting
 “ once more at least. Your good company a few
 “ weeks, will not only add to our present happiness,
 “ but will contribute to qualify us for greater felicity
 “ in that world where perfect love and friendship
 “ dwell. I do not see why we should not, while in
 “ this world, anticipate the happiness of the next.
 “ Certainly a genuine christian enjoys, whilst on
 “ earth, a felicity of the same kind as the pure spi-
 “ rits above. What I mean by the genuine christian,
 “ is, one who has learned from Christ himself an
 “ habitual regard to the Almighty in his whole con-
 “ versation ; one who fears, loves, and trusts in him,
 “ is pleased and delighted that all things are governed
 “ by him, who is benevolence itself ; one who has
 “ learned from the divine teacher, with the assistance
 “ of his holy spirit, to ingraft this god-like principle
 “ of benevolence into his whole soul ; in short, one
 “ who loves the Lord his God with all his soul, and
 “ his neighbour as himself. From such a christian,
 “ a selfish, sordid, covetous temper is entirely eradi-
 “ cated ; pride is wholly extinguished, envy killed,
 “ malice annihilated ; idleness, intemperance and
 “ debauchery

* Mrs. Ferguson.

" debauchery prevented : in a word, ' he is born of
 " God (as the beloved apostle emphatically expresses
 " it) and cannot sin ;' it would be self-denial, con-
 " trary to his very nature. His delight is in doing
 " good ; every faculty is exerted in this work : it is
 " his meat and drink. How blessed he, even in this
 " disordered world, who is thus acting in concert
 " with all the pure spirits above ! is viewed by them
 " with delight ! is respected by the good below as
 " one of the excellent of the earth ! This is the sal-
 " vation into which Christ has brought us. Every
 " good christian in this state, is already come to
 " mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the
 " heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company
 " of angels, &c. &c.

" Dear madam, how much is it to be wished,
 " that true christianity were understood by all its
 " professors ! And yet I think the knowlege of it, is
 " easily learned, by studying carefully the life and
 " character of our divine teacher, his doctrines and
 " precepts, the practical part of St. Paul's epistles,
 " the epistles of James, and John, particularly the
 " last, if men's minds have not been already poisoned
 " by reading books, mixed with antichristian prin-
 " ciples. These have been my sentiments for many
 " years, though different from those of many serious,
 " well-meaning persons. I am more confirmed in
 " them in my old age."

The

The ideas which Mr. Mort had long imbibed concerning the divine perfections and the nature of christianity, as they had a great influence in the formation of that amiable character he possessed, were likewise the comfort and support of his old age. They made the decline of life happy, because they enabled him to look forward to futurity with christian exultation. By his kindness he had created sincere and firm friends: and his having neglected to form that connection in life, which to some is a necessary provision against the loneliness of age, never appeared to have abridged the comfort of his latter days. He was always full of spirits, and it was after only a few hours indisposition, that he fell asleep, January the 12, 1788, in the eighty-sixth year of his age.

You, my friends, have deeply and justly lamented his death. But let us rejoice, that, though man is mortal, those christian virtues which render man the object of our love and veneration, are immortal. They warm, it is to be hoped, many of your breasts. There are, we trust, in our religious society, some who will tread in his footsteps, and emulate his zeal and his exertions in behalf of practical religion and of pure christianity. You will naturally have your eyes fixed upon *him* in particular, who sat at the feet of our late patriarch, who was peculiarly marked out as an object of his esteem, and who hath already afforded you some evidence of his being actuated by the same principles.

principles. But whilst we look up to *others*, let us never forget what we *ourselves* owe to the cause of truth and religion. There is not one among us who is not bound to do his utmost towards saving his own soul, and the souls of other men. That you may never be unmindful of your obligations, and that the Almighty may graciously accept and prosper all your sincere and upright endeavours to promote the knowledge and influence of the gospel, is the hearty wish and prayer of, my christian friends,

Your affectionate and faithful brother

in the lord Jesus,

H. TOULMIN.

CHOWBENT, JAN. 27, 1789.

The principal part of the following character was first inserted by Mr. Gore, in his Liverpool Paper. It afterwards appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine, for February 1788.

The late Mr. John Mort was the last male representative of an ancient and highly respectable family: a man equally distinguished for his piety, his benevolence, and the guileless simplicity of his manners. The leisure he enjoyed, from the avocations of business, was principally devoted to the study of the scriptures; and, unlearned in the subtleties of scholastic divinity, his inquiries were directed by the light of a clear

clear understanding, and the dictates of an upright heart. As the truths of christianity opened upon his mind, he was charmed with the majestic simplicity which marks the religion of the gospel: and whilst he felt its superior influence in enlightening his understanding, enlarging his views, and regulating the affections of his heart, the anxious and unremitting zeal with which he endeavoured to propagate his principles, in that circle through which his influence could extend, speaks a lesson of instruction to those who are devoted to theology by profession. He had been for many years a zealous, an active, and a truly useful member of the society of unitarian christians at Chowbent; and was remarkably successful in his endeavours to promote free inquiry, and what he esteemed to be unclouded views of christianity. But his religion did not terminate in mere speculation; it was seated in his honest heart. The uniform piety he maintained through life, was equally the result of principle and affection. The regularity of his devotions, and the cheerfulness of his temper, were equally remarkable. He was open as the day to melting charity, and plain-hearted hospitality was ever found beneath his roof. The poor blessed him. Every public spirited design which lay within the reach of his abilities, he was ever forward to support. By the force of personal character, he retained a patriarchal authority in his neighbourhood to the last. In every exigency,

exigency, his opinion was consulted, and his advice followed, as it was always the dictate of integrity and of a sound understanding. It is remarkable that old age had not upon him, the same effect as upon the generality of men. His mind was the same in the decline as in the meridian of life: there was the same cheerfulness, the same humane sensibility, the same devotional fervour, the same ardour in the cause of liberty, of truth, and of religion. Healthy by temperance and exercise, his life, though long, was unimbittered by sickness; and his death was almost instantaneous, and without a groan. Go, worthy man, prepared to enjoy a station in a happier world, suited to the virtues which adorned thy life in this!

The following lines were written by the celebrated Mrs. Barbauld, when upon a visit to Mr. Mort, about sixteen years ago.

“ Happy old man ! who stretch’d beneath the shade
 “ Of large grown trees, or in the rustic porch,
 “ With woodbine canopies, (where linger yet
 “ The hospitable virtues) calm enjoy’st
 “ Nature’s best blessings all, a healthy age,
 “ Ruddy and vigorous, native cheerfulness,
 “ Plain-hearted friendship, simple piety,
 “ The rural manners, and the rural joys,
 “ Friendly to life. Tho’ rude * of speech, yet rich

In

* Alluding to a natural impediment in his speech.

“ In genuine worth, not unobserv’d shall pass
“ Thy bashful virtues ; for the Muse shall mark,
“ Detect thy charities, and call to light
“ Thy secret deeds of mercy ; while the poor
“ The desolate and friendless, at thy gate,
“ A numerous family, with better praise,
“ Shall hallow in their hearts, thy spotless name.”

A

S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

MR. JOHN MORT,

AND PREACHED IN THE

NEW CHAPEL AT CHOWBENT,

IN ATHERTON,

JANUARY 20, 1788.

E

A

S E R M O N, &c.

L U K E xxiii. 47.

CERTAINLY THIS WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

THERE was something uncommonly awful in those appearances in nature, which accompanied the death of Jesus. Such a concurrence of extraordinary events had been scarcely ever known before. "Behold the vail of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake: and the rocks rent: and the sun was darkened: and the graves were opened. and many bodies of the saints, who slept, arose." We cannot wonder therefore that the centurion, and those who were with him, being witnesses of these things, feared greatly, and glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man." Had the same centurion been acquainted with the life and conduct, as well as the death of Jesus, it would have abundantly confirmed this favourable opinion of our master. Had he

he been with him, whilst he went about doing good; had he witnessed the affection towards his associates, his tenderness to the afflicted, his compassion for the multitude, his love for his country, and his piety to God; he would undoubtedly have said, "Certainly this is a righteous man." These were the surest indications of his character: and these are indications of character, by which we may judge of men in every age and in every situation. Miraculous attestations to the moral excellence of any one, are no longer to be found: nor have we any reason greatly to regret it, when the natural and more direct proofs of the best of hearts, are so clear and decisive in favour of a man, as they were in favour of our late venerable friend Mr. Mort.

No one who was acquainted with this true disciple of the amiable Jesus, will be backward to apply to him, the declaration of the centurion concerning our lord, "Certainly this was a righteous man." Were I disposed, my friends, to make the virtues of the deceased, the theme of a whole discourse, contrary as such a practice is to the reigning fashion, I should entertain no apprehension of your censure; could I, by so doing, render justice to his character. Such, I am persuaded, is your veneration for his memory, that you would gladly see me breaking through a general rule, and would cordially accompany me in every expression of affection and respect.

No one can be more clearly convinced than the preacher is, of the impropriety of making it a common practice, upon occasions of this kind, to pass some particular encomiums upon the character of the deceased. But, at the same time, he thinks, that there are men of singular worth, appearing now-and-then in the neighbourhood, whom we cannot suffer to pass by unnoticed, without doing an injury to the cause of religion. These are men, whose lives ought to be held up as objects of imitation; their examples being frequently, perhaps, of more importance to those who were connected with them than the examples of the worthies of antiquity. To the lives of the one we ourselves were probably eye witnesses; but the lives of the other we know nothing of, but by report and tradition.

It would be happy, my brethren, if we were properly affected by reviewing the life of the friend, whose departure we now lament. Never did we know a man, who hath exhibited a pattern more deserving our attention and imitation. Indeed, my friends, I feel myself utterly unequal to the task of giving you an *adequate* view of his character: and were I to attempt it, I should fear, that those whose acquaintance with him has been more perfect and of longer duration than mine, would say that I had not done justice to him. To such therefore, I would refer any who have not lived in habits of intimacy with him for information.

Ask

Ask those, who were so happy as to form a part of his family ; ask them what man he was in private ? They will tell you, that he was perfectly regular in his deportment ; that he was remarkably attentive to religious worship in his house ; and uniformly studious to promote, by a cheerful temper and a kind demeanour, the peace and comfort of those with whom he was connected. Though he was ever forward, when it lay in his power, to do any thing for the benefit of others ; he was always singularly anxious to be as little troublesome as possible himself. He never appeared to have a wish of availing himself, in the least, of those marks of attention and respect, to which his age or his character, or his situation, entitled him. All whom he favoured with his acquaintance, will tell us that he was the agreeable companion ; and always the sincere, the open-hearted, the steady friend. The man whom he called his friend in prosperity, he called his friend in adversity : for his attachments were withdrawn only by a change of disposition or conduct in the objects of his regard.

But ask not such as were his intimate and select associates merely : ask every one who had any dealings with him, if there were ever a man who dealt with greater fairness and integrity. They will tell us that his honesty was always superior to a love of interest : that he hath considered himself as bound by the laws of God, to act in opposition to his own per-

sonal advantage in cases, in which the less scrupulous consciences of men of common probity would have suffered them to consider themselves as at perfect liberty. Yet it was never the disposition of our amiable friend, to be satisfied with a discharge of duties alone which are dictated by the principles of equity ; for never did *universal love* glow with greater ardour in the human breast.

In proof of this, we may appeal to the sons of sorrow, of every description. But, indeed, an appeal to them must be unnecessary. The men who have witnessed his pity, and experienced his liberality, are to be met with any where in this neighbourhood, and there are few before me, but have heard some unfortunate man relate with what tenderness he has looked upon his distresses. An object of pity never went to his door in vain. Nor did he wound the feelings of the humble suppliant, with a long list of harsh inquiries, before he granted the boon of charity. A deslitute appearance, and an honest countenance, he thought, entitled any one to his regard. Some may, perhaps, imagine, that he granted relief with too indiscriminate an hand. But he had an idea probably, that by checking the emotions of pity, upon principles of prudence, there is imminent danger of weakening the power of that amiable affection, and that it therefore became him to give the rein to his humane feelings, though he regarded only the improvement

provement of his own mind. Certainly, then, this was a righteous man.

But his title to the appellation of a righteous man, could not be more clearly proved than by his conduct as a member of this religious society. It was such a conduct as I have the confidence to think that every christian present must approve. For my *own* part, I should admire and respect the zeal of a liberal minded church-man, or Roman catholic, though not exerted in support of that particular form of worship, which is adopted by christians of our denomination : and I should be most blameably deficient in charity, did I not believe, that any of you, my brethren, if any of our brethren of the Church of England, or of Rome*, be present, would feel an equal veneration for the religious zeal of a man, who ranked himself among the protestant dissenters. Yes, my brethren of every sect, I believe that you have enough of the spirit of the gospel, to esteem excellence, wherever it is found. Inquire, then, of the members of this christian society, if there were ever one of their number more active or more useful than our deceased friend ? They will assure you as strongly as they can, that they never knew his equal. They will speak of him as the father of this congregation. They will tell you with what generosity he contributed to the support of their respectability as a religious society ; how earnest he was in promoting any plan for their improve-

* As I have been told is sometimes the case.

improvement in knowlege and in virtue, and for the maintenance of their peace and felicity. Indeed he had nothing more at heart, than to extingnish every spark of discord and animosity, and to fan the flame of brotherly love, that unity and harmony might universally prevail among us.

They will tell you, that he was equally exemplary in the regularity of his attendance upon public worship, and that, though for many years past, he might have pleaded his age, as an apology for more indulgence than he was accustomed to in younger life, yet, he was as constant as any one, to the day of his death. Though few men *needed* it less, none were more mindful of the means of improvement: for he never had an idea that because a man may, for the most part, be already acquainted with those truths which are delivered from the pulpit, he is therefore, excused from resorting to the place of public worship. But why do we mention these particulars? The single circumstance of his influence with this society of christians, is of itself a proof, that he was a respectable and useful member of the society. You, my brethren, will not scruple to inform any stranger that may question you, that the opinion of Mr. Mort would have weighed more with you, than the opinion of any ten persons in the congregation. You will at the same time assure him, that this influence could never have been owing to our friend's possessing greater property than other persons, or merely to the
liberality

liberality of his contributions to the support of public instruction, but to a singular amiable disposition, and to a general respectability of character. But when you are speaking of his influence over us, you will be careful not to let any one imagine that he was ever forward to exert that influence, but in promoting peace and unanimity. Very frequently has he freely given up his own views and sentiments to those of other people: and he has in many cases been silent, with respect to measures which he conceived would be of great utility, particularly with regard to the method of conducting public worship, merely from the apprehension, that his ideas might possibly vary from the ideas of some individuals in the congregation. You must all, my friends, have known instances of his backwardness to declare his own private opinion upon questions which have in course come before this society; lest he should throw an undue bias in the way of your deliberations. It was his uniform wish to throw a bias on no side but on the side of virtue. To this point he directed all his influence. To improve the amiable dispositions of those with whom he was connected, was an object which he had at heart to the very latest hour of his life. With this view, he drew up, not long before his death, an address to this christian society, intimating a wish that it should be communicated to them after his departure. You, my christian brethren, I trust, will pay to it all the regard

regard due to the dying words of an old and much respected friend. I will recite it to you, believing that an attention to it may be of benefit, not to those only who consider themselves as members of this society, but to any of our fellow-christians, who are not regular attendants at this place.

“ My dear Friends and Fellow-Christians of our Religious Society at Chowbent :

The uncommon respect you have always shewn me, makes me confident you will receive this, my parting and farewell address, with candour. Though the subject of it may be singular and out of the common way, I hope it may be of real service to some of you. It is my hearty wish that you would, with due care, consider what may be learned from a serious meditation upon an important part of the history of the life of our saviour Jesus Christ, as the following.

FIRST CONSIDERATION. Whether there was not one disciple whom he loved more than any of the rest?

SECOND CONSIDERATION. Whether it was not the humane, friendly, benevolent disposition of the apostle John, that made him this favourite?

THIRD CONSIDERATION. Whether it is not in our power, if we do our best, to attain to this amiable temper?

FOURTH

FOURTH CONSIDERATION. How inconsistent are those who know and believe this historical truth, and yet are unconcerned whether they attain to this amiable disposition: especially if they believe that our saviour will be their judge, at the day of final retribution?

FIFTH CONSIDERATION. Whether those who attain to the amiable disposition of the apostle John, will not be owned and rewarded, by the impartial Judge, as his favourites, before men and angels, at the great day of final retribution?

What good these meditations may do you, I know not; but this I know, that these meditations on this part of history have done me more good than all the practical discourses which I have heard or read. *August 10, 1788.*"

From this you may see, my brethren, upon what his mind was most intent. It was upon making us wiser and better. "Certainly, then, this was a righteous man." In this light indeed every one is disposed to consider him; for there have been few persons held in such universal esteem. He was respected and beloved not only by people of his own persuasion, but by men of all sects and parties. All were prepossessed in his favour. And where shall we seek for the cause of this, but in the *character* of the man. His rank, his wealth, his influence, his power, were by no means such as to procure him this regard.

It

It was merely the charitable use he made of the little he possessed ; his constant readiness to relieve the distressed, and in general, that " humane, friendly, benevolent disposition," he had learnt from the favourite of Jesus, which rendered him so much the object of universal love. Indeed had our fellow-christians of the established church or of the church of Rome, heard his expressions of charity and kindness for them, and for all the household of faith ; had they known with what uncommon satisfaction he has listened to such exhortations from the pulpit, as have been dictated by a desire of promoting the influence of a liberal and catholic spirit ; they would have been strongly confirmed in their favourable opinion of him, and with one heart and one voice would have echoed, " certainly this is a righteous man." They, therefore, will feelingly concur with his more immediate connections in lamenting that a man so excellent and so amiable is no more. But at the same time, we have reason to be thankful, my friends, that Almighty God was pleased to continue him to us, for a length of time, so much exceeding the common term of human life, and especially that he blessed him, with a capacity for usefulness, even to his latest days. And now, though he is sleeping with his fathers, let us not consider him as a friend whom we have lost for ever. He is only retired to rest, and will awake with renewed vigour in the morning of the resurrection.

tion. Those amiable qualities, those christian virtues which adorned his mind, and made him the object of our esteem and love, are only like the flowers in winter, withered, indeed, for a little time, but which, on the return of spring, will appear again in all their loveliness and beauty. Then shall we once more behold, and once more admire, that integrity, that generosity, that humanity, that piety, that zeal for truth and for religion, which in this world we have contemplated with so much delight and satisfaction. Then shall we see those virtues unfettered in their exertions by the various difficulties which weaken their efforts in this mortal state, and the good man himself traversing with ardour and with christian exultation, a much wider field of usefulness than the present world is capable of affording. Did I say that we shall behold him in the world of bliss? We *shall*, indeed, if we be possessed of a soul like his: but it is in vain for us to expect it otherwise. The society to which he will belong, will be that of just men made perfect: a society of which we must become members, would we have communion with him. Let us then endeavour to copy, as nearly as we can, that pattern which he hath left for our imitation. Let us retire to our closets, and review, as impartially as we are able, our dispositions and past behaviour, compare them with those of our departed friend, and mark wherein lies our principal deficiency. Let us mark it carefully, that in future our principal attention

may be directed towards an amendment. Let us never forget how amiable our friend was rendered by the virtues which adorned his mind, how truly he became thereby the object of every one's love and veneration.

Do you, my brethren, who are members of this religious society, pay an especial attention to the character he sustained as one of our number. Let us call to mind his generous zeal, and his influence among us : and let it be the aim of every one of us, to fill his place, not by striving to acquire the same weight with the society, but by endeavouring to cultivate the same amiable spirit, and to do the same good. If, instead of this, he had sought popularity and influence, it is probable that he would never have obtained it. Had he not frequently sacrificed his private sentiments and wishes, though founded in truth, to those of other persons, he would never have maintained, justly as he deserved it, he never would have maintained the influence he had acquired. Let us, my friends, imitate in this respect, the example of our elder brother. Let us not be eager to bring forward any favourite plans, unless we be fully satisfied that the welfare of the society is intimately connected with them : nor let us vehemently support our own opinions, when we find that they vary from those of our fellow-christians, but let our moderation be known unto all men. If we be liberal in promoting the knowledge of religion, if we be lovers of
peace

peace and unity, and, above all, if we be unblameable in our deportment, and followers of that which is good, we shall obtain and preserve all the influence which a good man can wish for, or which a christian has a right to expect. But I say no more. I am addressing the disciples of Jesus. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

A

PRAYER FOR A FAMILY.*

O LORD our God, we worship thee who art the only living and true God, besides whom there is no other. The idols of the heathen are vanity, and a lie: those who trust in them, are like unto them; but thou art from everlasting, to everlasting, God, without the least variableness or shadow of turning: the great Creator, the wise and righteous Governor, and the just Judge of the world. Worthy, O Lord, art thou of our most profound reverence and adoration, our constant and faithful obedience, our firmest trust and confidence, our joy and delight; for thou possessest all possible perfection, natural and moral. Thou art a Being of all-comprehending knowlege, unerring and infallible wisdom, unlimited power, impartial justice, boundless goodness, unspotted purity, unchangeable truth and faithfulness. These thy perfections are constantly exercised for the good of the whole creation. Wherever we turn our eye, what part soever of thy works we contemplate, we see the footsteps of an Almighty being; we see thy

* These prayers might be properly used at any meetings for the purposes of religious improvement, such as have been lately set on foot in this neighbourhood by the members of our congregation.

thy power, wisdom and goodness, manifested in a most glorious manner. We adore thee as our Creator, our constant Preserver, and the Redeemer of our souls. We praise thee who hast placed us so high in the rank of beings, in this lower world ; who hast subjected all other creatures to our use and convenience, making man a lord in this lower world. It has pleased thee to confer on us the noble gifts of reason, intelligence and liberty, whereby we are made capable of yielding unto thee an acceptable service and obedience, and of attaining to the highest honours, to the most refined and solid bliss. Happy had it been for us, had we always behaved suitably to the dignity of our rational nature, and been faithful in thy service : but alas ! we have reason to acknowledge, with the deepest shame, that we have neglected to cultivate and improve the noble talents which by thy goodness have been intrusted to us. In our carelessness we have suffered ourselves to be corrupted by the temptations that are in the world, through lust. The objects of our senses have often, through our own fault, made an undue impression on our minds : we have thereby been enticed to do many things unbecoming the dignity of our rational nature, much more unbecoming our character as christians. If thou shouldst be severe to animadvert on all our past follies and miscarriages, we should be miserable indeed : but with thee there is mercy, that thou mayest be feared. We rejoice to know, that thou art by the gospel of Jesus, reconciling a sinful world unto thyself, not im-

putting unto the humble, the penitent and obedient, their iniquity and transgressions. Thou has given us this assurance by thy son Jesus Christ, whom thou hast exalted to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to thy people. Having such encouragement, we would sincerely repent of all our past follies: we would now acquaint ourselves with thee, and be at peace, that thereby good may come: we desire from the heart to forgive those who have trespassed against us: we would now engage ourselves without reserve in thy service. Be gracious, O Lord, to forgive all our past iniquities; receive us into thy favour; aid us by thy spirit, that we may make good our resolutions against sin; that we may overcome the world, and maintain constantly a just government over our passions, appetites and affections, regulating them according to the rules of reason, and of thy word. May we always live under the influence of a divine faith, and attain to that measure of it, which will give us a happy victory over this world. May we have that faith which works by love and purifies the heart and conduct: may the sincerity of our faith and love be manifested, by an obedient life, a fruitful conversation: and may we do all we can to advance thine honour, obedience to thy laws, and the good of mankind: especially may we strive to adorn our profession, by being examples of every thing that is virtuous and praise-worthy; aiming still at higher attainments in knowledge, wisdom and virtue: and may we be daily more confirmed and established in the ways

ways of truth and goodness. Amidst the many changes, difficulties, and trials of life, may we be enabled to preserve a becoming serenity of temper, always in patience possessing our souls: at last may we finish well, and have an abundant entrance into thine everlasting kingdom.

Hear,* O Lord, our prayers for others: extend thy merciful regards to the whole world. In compassion to the infirmities of mankind, send into every dark corner of the earth the saving light of thy gospel: and where thy gospel is sent, may it meet with due reception: may men learn from it, as it teaches them, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godlily in this present evil world. O that men may every where learn to know and fear thee, and to work righteousness, that they may be accepted of thee. May christianity prevail in its native purity: may all professing christians learn an humble, charitable, benevolent disposition of mind: may there be no more destroying in all thine holy mountain: may none that profess themselves the followers of Jesus, dare to usurp the sacred rights of conscience: may those who have dared to oppress the cause of truth, be ashamed: may that liberty which Jesus has left to his churches, be maintained by all his followers: may our civil and religious rights be preserved to us to the latest generations, that ages yet unborn may praise thy name. Above all save us
from

* This paragraph may be omitted when the whole prayer would be too long.

from our sins, that iniquity may not be our ruin. By a sincere reformation, may we have better grounds to hope for the continuance of thy favours. Bless our king: may he rule in thy fear: may he still live and be a great blessing to us: under him may we enjoy peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty. Bless the prince of Wales, form his mind to a love of piety, virtue, and liberty: may all the royal family be blessed: never may we want a protestant prince to sway the sceptre of these nations. May all of us in our different stations exert ourselves, and use the influence we have to discourage vice, to promote rational piety and solid virtue. In this important work especially may the ministers of the gospel be diligent and faithful, and do thou, O Father, make them successful. (*This day* may acceptable services be performed in all thy churches: may we worship thee who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth, and may the truths we shall hear or read, be useful to us.*)

We praise thee for the mercies of the past night (or day). It is thou who keepest us from the terrors by night, and from the arrows that fly by day: still be our kind guardian; and may the close of every day be comfortable. Pity, O God of all comfort, those who want our mercies: ease the pained, raise up those that are bowed down: comfort the feeble-minded: provide for the poor: manifest thy goodness to those that love and fear thee. We ask all as the disciples of Jesus thy well beloved son our saviour; and as he

has

* To be introduced on Sunday morning.

he hath taught us, would ascribe unto thee, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the one only living and true God, all might, majesty and dominion, now and evermore. Amen,

A

SECOND PRAYER.

O MOST great and glorious Jehovah, the high and holy One inhabiting eternity! Thou only possessest all possible perfection, art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Thou art the greatest and the best of Beings: goodness is thy nature and delight. Thou hast proclaimed thyself to be the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; though thou canst by no means clear the guilty, such as are impenitently so. It has pleased thee to make a free and open declaration by thy son Jesus Christ, of thy readiness to forgive every sincerely repenting and returning sinner. We rejoice in thy promised pardon and salvation: we praise thee who hast called us with an holy calling; called us to virtue, to liberty, to glory. All things are now ready on thy part, for our being received into thy kingdom

kingdom, for our being made wise, virtuous, holy and happy. May not this salvation miss on our part, through our obstinacy, or negligence : may we cheerfully comply with the requirements of thy gospel : may we forsake every false way, be enabled to rectify the disorders of our mind, to assert the liberty of our souls : may the gospel of Jesus make us free, and we shall be free indeed. Enable us frequently and seriously to take an impartial and deliberate survey of our own tempers and characters, and to bring our actions before the tribunal of reason and conscience. And do thou, O most merciful Father of our spirits, search us and try us : remove the veil of self-love and partiality from before the eyes of our minds, and shew us to ourselves in our genuine colours. Whatever is irregular and perverted in our inward frame, do thou graciously assist us in rectifying. If there be any good dispositions in us, may they be abundantly strengthened and established by thee. May we never rest satisfied with any attainments we have already made in virtue, or think that we are already perfect : but forgetting the things which are behind, may we press forward with unremitting ardour towards the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Assist us in cultivating every divine and amiable disposition, that our tempers may be sweetened, our hearts purified, our manners refined, and that our souls may daily be advancing to perfection. We would learn of our dear and honoured master an humble,

ble, compassionate, benevolent temper of mind. May old things be done away : may all things become new : may we be created anew in Christ Jesus, to serve thee the living and true God : so may we behave ourselves, that on the most impartial examination of our conduct, we may have reason to approve it, may have confidence towards thee, and may always on good grounds rejoice in hope of glory. May we live under the influence of a divine faith, behave with becoming indifference to present things, knowing that we have not long to stay here. May we use this world as not abusing it, seeing the fashion of it passeth away ; and whilst we are necessarily employed about things pertaining to this life, may we by no means be unmindful of our future interest. May we above all things take care to secure a good foundation against the time to come, seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, not doubting but that all needful things will be added to us. Support us under the difficulties that yet lie before us in the present state of trial. May we be humble in prosperity, patient and resigned in adversity. May every affliction prove in thy hand, a kind and faithful means of discipline to train up our minds in the exercise of those virtues, which will make us useful here, blessings in our stations, and fit us for being joined to a purer society above, amongst whom, none that are impure, shall ever be admitted.

Blessed

Blessed be thy name, O gracious Father, for the mercies we have enjoyed through our past lives, and for the various comforts which surround us at present. We thank thee for the measure of health we enjoy in our bodies, and for the free and regular exercise of the powers and faculties of our minds. May thy kind providence still watch over us, and crown all our honourable undertakings and honest labours with success. Enable us to discharge every duty with integrity and cheerfulness, and to improve every blessing we receive from thee to thine honour and glory, and all the praise shall be rendered to thine excellent name. These our prayers we would present unto thee, O God of grace, in the spirit of thy son's gospel. Now unto the blessed and the only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The following Character of Mr. MORT, (by Mr. JOSEPH SMITH, of Liverpool) is inscribed on a slab of marble in New Bent Chapel, dedicated to his memory by Mr. PETER VALENTINE.

THIS monument is erected as a testimony of veneration for the character of Mr. John Mort, the last male representative of a highly respectable family, and long a distinguished member of this religious society: who ended a life of usefulness and honour, on the 12th day of January, 1788, in the 86th year of his age. The leisure he enjoyed from the avocations of business, was principally devoted to the study of the scriptures; and unlearned in the subtleties of scholastic divinity, his enquiries were directed by the light of a clear understanding, and the dictates of an upright heart. The unremitting zeal, with which he endeavoured to propagate the principles of Christian truth, furnishes an example to those who are devoted to theology by profession. His religion did not terminate in mere speculation: the uniform fidelity he maintained, was only equalled by the ardor of his benevolence, and the simplicity of his manners. By the force of personal character, he retained a patriarchal authority in his neighbourhood, to the last. Though born to a liberal fortune, which was improved by a regular, and successful industry, he disdained the purposes of vulgar ambition, and studiously employed

the bounty of heaven, in relieving the sorrows of nature, and extending the happiness of life. Every public-spirited design he was forward to promote: he was open as the day to melting charity, and plain-hearted hospitality was ever found beneath his roof. The habitual devotion of his mind and the consciousness of useful exertions, produced that cheerfulness, which even old age was unable to impair; nor did he survive either the vigour of his understanding, or the sensibility of his heart, the fervour of his piety, or his generous attachment to the cause of liberty and truth. Through temperance and exercise, his life, though long, was unimbittered by sickness. His death was almost instant, and without a groan.

R E A D E R,

While you revere his character, endeavour to copy his example.

T H E E N D.

OF
THE TRUTH
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

FROM
"OBSERVATIONS ON MAN," &c.

PART II.

BY DAVID HARTLEY, M.A.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCHII.

THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY

JOHN CALVIN

TABLE

BY DAVID HART

LONDON

PRINTED BY J. B. ROBERTS

(4)

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T H E T R U T H

O F T H E

C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N .

TO believe the christian religion, is to believe that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were endued with divine authority, that they had a commission from God to act and teach as they did, and that he will verify their declarations concerning future things, and especially those concerning a future life, by the event; or, in other words, it is to receive the scriptures as our rule of life, and the foundation of all our hopes and fears. And as all those who regulate their faith and practice by the scriptures are christians; so all those who disclaim that name, and pass under the general title of unbelievers, do also disavow this regard to the scriptures. But there are various classes of unbelievers. Some appear to treat the scriptures as mere forgeries; others allow them to be the genuine writings of those whose names they bear, but suppose them to abound with fictions, not only in the miraculous, but also in the common part of the history; others again, allow this part, but

reject that; and, lastly, there are others who seem to allow the truth of the principal facts, both common and miraculous, contained in the scriptures, and yet still call in question its divine authority, as a rule of life, and an evidence of a happy futurity under Christ our saviour and king. He, therefore, that would satisfy himself or others in the truth of the christian religion, as opposed by these several classes of unbelievers, must inquire into these three things.

First, The genuineness of the books of the Old and New Testaments.

Secondly, The truth of the principal facts contained in them, both common and miraculous. And,

Thirdly, Their divine authority.

I will endeavour, therefore, to state some of the chief evidences for each of these important points, having first premised three preparatory propositions, or lemmas, whereby the evidence for any one of them may be transferred upon the other two.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

For, First, It is very rare to meet with any genuine writings of the historical kind, in which the principal facts are not true; unless where both the motives which engaged the author to falsify, and the circumstances which gave some plausibility to the fiction,

fiction, are apparent ; neither of which can be alleged in the present case with any colour of reason. Where the writer of a history appears to the world as such, not only his moral sense, but his regard to his character and his interest, are strong motives not to falsify in notorious matters ; he must therefore have stronger motives from the opposite quarter, and also a favourable conjuncture of circumstances, before he can attempt this.

Secondly, As this is rare in general, so it is much more rare, where the writer treats of things that happened in his own time, and under his own cognizance or direction, and communicates his history to persons under the same circumstances. All which may be said of the writers of the scripture history.

That this, and the following arguments, may be applied with more ease and clearness, I will here, in one view, refer the books of the Old and New Testaments to their proper authors. I suppose then, that the Pentateuch consists of the writings of *Moses*, put together by *Samuel*, with a very few additions ; that the books of *Joshua* and *Judges* were, in like manner, collected by him ; and the book of *Ruth*, with the first part of the first book of *Samuel*, written by him ; that the latter part of the first book of *Samuel*, and the second book, were written by the prophets who succeeded *Samuel*, suppose *Nathan* and *Gad* ; that the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* are extracts from the records of the succeeding prophets concerning their

own times, and from the public genealogical tables, made by *Ezra*; that the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* are collections of like records, some written by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and some by their predecessors; that the book of *Esther* was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transaction there recorded, perhaps *Mordecai*; the book of *Job* by a Jew of an uncertain time; the *Psalms* by *David*, and other pious persons; the books of *Proverbs* and *Canticles* by *Solomon*; the book of *Ecclesiastes* by *Solomon*, or perhaps by a Jew of later times, speaking in his person, but not with an intention to make him pass for the author; the prophecies, by the prophets whose names they bear; and the books of the New Testament by the persons to whom they are usually ascribed. There are many internal evidences, and in the case of the New Testament many external evidences also, by which these books may be shewn to belong to the authors here named. Or, if there be any doubts, they are merely of a critical nature, and do not at all affect the genuineness of the books, nor alter the application of these arguments, or not materially. Thus, if the Epistle to the *Hebrews* be supposed written, not by *St. Paul*, but by *Clement* or *Barnabas*, or any other of their contemporaries, the evidence therein given to the miracles performed by Christ, and his followers, will not be at all invalidated thereby.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The great importance of the facts mentioned in the scriptures makes it still more improbable, that the several authors should either have attempted to falsify, or have succeeded in such an attempt. This is an argument for the truth of the facts, which proves the genuineness of the books at the same time, as I shall shew below in a distinct proposition. However, the truth of the fact is inferred more directly from their importance, if the genuineness of the scriptures be previously allowed. The same thing may be observed of the great number of particular circumstances of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the scriptures, and of the harmony of the books with themselves, and with each other. These are arguments both for the genuineness of the books, and truth of the facts distinctly considered, and also arguments for deducing the truth from the genuineness. And indeed the arguments for the general truth of the history, of any age or nation, where regular records have been kept, are so interwoven together, and support each other in such a variety of ways, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ideas of them distinct, not to anticipate, and not to prove more than the exactness of method requires one to prove. Or, in other words, the inconsistency of the contrary suppositions is so great, that they can scarce stand long enough to be confuted. Let any one try this in the history of *France*, or *England*, *Greece*, or *Rome*.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, If the books of the Old and New Testaments were written by the persons to whom they were ascribed above, *i. e.* if they be genuine, the moral characters of these writers afford the strongest assurance, that the facts asserted by them are true. Falsehoods and frauds of a common nature shock the moral sense of common men, and are rarely met with, except in persons of abandoned characters: how inconsistent then must those of the most glaring and impious nature be with the highest moral characters! That such characters are due to the sacred writers appears from the writings themselves by an internal evidence; but there is also strong external evidence in many cases: and indeed this point is allowed in general by unbelievers. The sufferings which several of the writers underwent both in life and death, in attestation of the facts delivered by them, is a particular argument in favour of these.

Fifthly, The arguments here alleged for proving the truth of the scripture history from the genuineness of the books, are as conclusive in respect of the miraculous facts, as of the common ones. But besides this we may observe, that if we allow the genuineness of the books to be a sufficient evidence of the common facts mentioned in them, the miraculous facts must be allowed also from their close connection with the common ones. It is necessary to admit both or neither. It is not to be conceived, that *Moses* should have delivered the *Israelites* from their slavery in Egypt,

Egypt, or conducted them through the wilderness for forty years, at all, in such manner as the common history represents, unless we suppose the miraculous facts intermixed with it to be true also. In like manner, the fame of Christ's miracles, the multitudes which followed him, the adherence of his disciples, the jealousy and hatred of the chief priests, scribes and pharisees, with many other facts of a common nature, are impossible to be accounted for, unless we allow, that he did really work miracles. And the same observations hold in general of the other parts of the scripture history.

Sixthly, There is even a particular argument in favour of the miraculous part of the scripture history, to be drawn from the reluctance of mankind to receive miraculous facts. It is true, that this reluctance is greater in some ages and nations than in others; and probable reasons may be assigned why this reluctance was, in general, less in ancient times than in the present (which, however, are presumptions that some real miracles were then wrought); but it must always be considerable from the very frame of the human mind, and would be particularly so amongst the *Jews* at the time of Christ's appearance, as they had then been without miracles for four hundred years, or more. Now this reluctance must make both the writers and readers very much upon their guard; and if it be now one of the chief prejudices against revealed religion, as unbelievers unanimously assert,

assert, it is but reasonable to allow also, that it would be a strong check upon the publication of a miraculous history at or near the time when the miracles were said to be performed, *i. e.* it will be a strong confirmation of such an history, if its genuineness be granted previously.

And, upon the whole, we may certainly conclude, that the principal facts, both common and miraculous, mentioned in the scriptures, must be true, if their genuineness be allowed. The objection against all miraculous facts will be considered below, after the other arguments of the truth of the scripture miracles have been alleged.

The converse of this proposition is also true, *i. e.* if the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures be true, they must be genuine writings. And though this converse proposition may, at first sight, appear to be of little importance for the establishment of christianity, inasmuch as the genuineness of the scriptures is only made use of as a medium whereby to prove the truth of the facts mentioned in them, yet it will be found otherwise upon farther examination. For there are many evidences for the truth of particular facts mentioned in the scriptures, such, for instance, as those taken from natural history, and the cotemporary profane history, which no ways presuppose, but, on the contrary, prove the genuineness of the scriptures; and this genuineness, thus proved, may, by the arguments alleged under this proposition,

tion, be extended to infer the truth of the rest of the facts. Which is not to argue in a circle, and to prove the truth of the scripture history from its truth; but to prove the truth of those facts, which are not attested by natural or civil history, from those which are, by the medium of the genuineness of the scriptures.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE truth of this proposition, as it respects the book of *Daniel*, seems to have been acknowledged by *Porphry*, inasmuch as he could no ways invalidate the divine authority of this book, implied by the accomplishment of the prophecies therein delivered, but by asserting, that they were written after the event, *i. e.* were forgeries. But the same thing holds of many of the other books of the Old and New Testaments, many of them having unquestionable evidences of the divine foreknowledge, if they be allowed genuine. I reserve the prophetic evidences to be discussed hereafter, and therefore shall only suggest the following instances here, in order to illustrate the proposition, viz. *Moses's* prophecy concerning the captivity of the *Israelites*, of a state not yet erected; *Isaiab's* concerning *Cyrus*; *Jeremiah's* concerning the duration of the *Babylonish* captivity; *Christ's* concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the

the captivity that was to follow ; St. *John's* concerning the great corruption of the christian church ; and *Daniel's* concerning the fourth empire in its declension ; which last was extant in *Porphyry's* time at least, *i. e.* before the events which it so fitly represents.

The same thing follows from the sublimity and excellence of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. These no ways suit the supposed authors, *i. e.* the ages when they lived, their educations or occupations ; and therefore, if they were the real authors, there is a necessity of admitting the divine assistance.

The converse of this proposition, viz. that the divine authority of the scriptures infers their genuineness, will, I suppose, be readily acknowledged by all. And it may be used for the same purposes as the converse of the last. For there are several evidences for the divine authority of the scriptures, which are direct and immediate, and prior to the consideration both of their genuineness, and of the truth of the facts contained in them. Of this kind is the character of Christ, as it may be collected from his discourses and actions related in the gospels. The great and manifest superiority of this to all other characters, real and fictitious, proves, at once, his divine mission, exclusively of all other considerations. Suppose now the genuineness of St. *Luke's* gospel to be deduced in this way, the genuineness of the *Acts* of the apostles may be deduced from it, and
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of St. *Paul's* epistles from the *Acts*, by the usual critical methods. And when the genuineness of the *Acts* of the Apostles, and of St. *Paul's* epistles, is thus deduced, the truth of the facts mentioned in them will follow from it by the last proposition; and their divine authority by this.

THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS proposition may be proved two ways; first, exclusively of the evidences of natural religion, such as those delivered in the last chapter; and secondly, from the previous establishment of the great truths of natural religion. And, first,

It is evident, that the great power, knowledge, and benevolence, which appeared in Christ, the prophets and apostles, according to the scripture accounts, do as it were, command assent and submission from all all those who receive these accounts as historical truths; and that, though they are not able to deduce, or have not, in fact, deduced the evidences of natural religion; nay, though they should have many doubts about them, the frame of the human mind is such, that the scripture history, allowed to be true, must convince us, that Christ, the prophets and apostles, were endowed with a power greater than human, and acted by the authority of a being of the highest wisdom and goodness.

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Secondly,

Secondly, If natural religion be previously established, the truth of the principal facts of the scriptures proves their divine authority, in an easier and more convincing manner.

For, first, The power shewn in the miracles wrought by Christ, the prophets and apostles, the knowlege in their prophecies, and their good moral characters, shew them to be, in an eminent manner the children, servants, and messengers, of him, who is now previously acknowledged to be infinite in power, knowlege, and goodness.

Secondly, Christ, the prophets and apostles, make an express claim to a divine mission. Now, it cannot be reconciled to God's moral attributes of justice, veracity, mercy, &c. that he should permit these persons to make such a claim falsely, and then endue them, or suffer them to be endued, with such credentials; as must support such a false claim. Their claim is not, therefore, a false one, if we admit their credentials; or, in other words, the truth of the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures proves the divine mission of Christ, the prophets, and apostles, *i. e.* the divine authority of the scriptures.

The same observations may be made upon the converse of this proposition, as upon those of the two last.

And thus the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of the principal facts contained in them, and their divine authority, appear to be so connected with each other,

other, that any one being established upon independent principles, the other two may be inferred from it. The first and second of these points are, indeed, more evidently subservient to the last, than the last is to them; for, if the last be allowed, it is at once all that the believer contends for: whereas some persons appear to admit, or not to reject, the first, or even the second, and yet are ranked under the title of unbelievers. It is necessary to shew to such persons, that the first and second infer each other mutually, and both of them the last; and it may be of some use to shew, that the last infers the two first in such a way, as to cast some light upon itself, without arguing in a circle; the divine authority of one book being made to infer the genuineness of another, or the facts contained in it, *i. e.* its divine authority also.

Here it may not be amiss to say something concerning the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Now there are three different suppositions, which may be made concerning this point.

The first and lowest is, that all the passages delivered by *Moses* and the prophets, as coming from God, and by the evangelists, as the words of Christ, also the revelation given to St. *John* in a divine vision, with all parallel portions of scripture, must be considered as divinely inspired, and as having immediate divine authority, else we cannot allow even common authority to these books; but that the common history, the reasonings of the apostles from the Old Testament,

and perhaps some of their opinions, may be considered as coming merely from themselves, and therefore, though highly to be regarded, are not of unquestionable authority. The arguments for this hypothesis may be, that since the scriptures have suffered by transcribers, like other books, a perfect exactness in the original, as to minute particulars, (in which alone it has suffered, or could suffer, from transcribers) is needless; that *Moses* and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles, had natural talents for writing history, applying the scriptures, reasoning, and delivering their opinions; and that God works by natural means, where there are such; that the apostles were ignorant of the true extent of *Christ's* kingdom for a considerable time after his resurrection, and perhaps mistaken about his second coming; that God might intend, that nothing in this world should be perfect, our blessed lord excepted; that some historical facts seem difficult to be reconciled to one another, and some applications of passages from the Old Testament by the writers of the New, with their reasonings thereupon, inconclusive and unsatisfactory; that the writers themselves no where lay claim to infallibility, when speaking from themselves; and that *Hermas*, *Clemens Romanus*, and *Barnabas*, who were apostolical persons, seem evidently to have reasoned in an inconclusive manner.

The second hypothesis is, that historical incidents of small moment, with matters of a nature foreign to religion,

religion, may indeed not have divine authority ; but that all the rest of the scriptures, the reasonings, the application of the prophecies, and even the doctrines of inferior note, must be inspired ; else what can be meant of the spirit, particularly that of prophecy, *i. e.* of instructing others ? How can *Christ's* promise of the Comforter, who should lead his disciples into *all truth*, be fulfilled ? Will not the very essentials of religion, the divine mission of *Christ*, providence, and a future state, be weakened by thus supposing the sacred writers to be mistaken in religious points ? And though the history and the reasonings of the scriptures have the marks of being written in the same manner as other books, *i. e.* may seem not to be inspired, yet a secret influence might conduct the writers in every thing of moment, even when they did not perceive it, or reflect upon it themselves ; it being evident, from obvious reasonings, as well as from the foregoing theory, that the natural workings of the mind are not to be distinguished from those, which a being that has a sufficient power over our intellectual frame might excite in us.

The third and last hypothesis is, that the whole scriptures are inspired, even the most minute historical passages, the salutations, incidental mention of common affairs, &c. The arguments in favour of this hypothesis are, that many parts of scripture appear to have double, or perhaps manifold senses ; that not one jot or tittle of the law (*i. e.* of the whole scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, in an enlarged

way of interpretation, which however seems justifiable by parallel instances) shall perish; that the Bible, *i. e.* the book of books, as we now have it, appears to have been remarkably distinguished by Providence from all other writings, even of good *Jews* and *Christians*, and to admit of a vindication in respect of small difficulties, and small seeming inconsistencies, as well as of great ones, every day more and more as we advance in knowledge; and that effects of the same kind with divine inspiration, *viz.* the working of miracles, and the gift of prophecy, subsisted during the times of the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and even in all, or nearly all, of these writers; also that they extended, in some cases, to very minute things.

I will not presume to determine which of these three suppositions approaches nearest to the truth. The following propositions will, I hope, establish the first of them at least, and prove the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of these facts contained in them, and their divine authority, to such a degree, as that we need not fear to make them the rules of our lives, and the ground of our future expectations; which is all that is absolutely necessary for the proof of the christian religion, and the satisfaction and comfort of religious persons. I even believe, that the following evidences favour the second hypothesis strongly, and exclude all errors and imperfections of note; nay, I am inclined to believe, that serious, inquisitive men can

can scarce rest there, but will be led by the successive clearing of difficulties, and unfolding the most wonderful truths, to believe the whole scriptures to be inspired, and to abound with numberless uses and applications, of which we yet know nothing. Let future ages determine. The evidently miraculous nature of one part, viz. the prophetical, disposes the mind to believe the whole to be far above human invention, or even penetration, till such time as our understandings shall be farther opened by the events which are to precede the second coming of *Christ*. In the mean while, let critics and learned men of all kinds have full liberty to examine the sacred books; and let us be sparing in our censures of each other. *Let us judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; and then shall every man have praise of God.* Sobriety of mind, humility, and piety, are requisite in the pursuit of knowlege of every kind, and much more in that of sacred. I have here endeavoured to be impartial to each hypothesis, and just to hint what I apprehended each party would or might say in defence of their own. However, *they are all brethren, and ought not to fall out by the way.*

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM AGE TO AGE, PROVES BOTH THEIR GENUINENESS, AND THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

FOR, first, It resembles the manner in which all other genuine books and true histories have been conveyed down to posterity. As the writings of the *Greek* and *Roman* poets, orators, philosophers and historians, were esteemed by these nations to be transmitted to them by their forefathers in a continued succession, from the times when the respective authors lived, so have the books of the Old Testament by the *Jewish* nation, and those of the New by the *Christians*; and it is an additional evidence in the last case, that the primitive christians were not a distinct nation, but a great multitude of people dispersed through all the nations of the *Roman* empire, and even extending itself beyond the bounds of that empire. As the *Greeks* and *Romans* always believed the principal facts of their historical books, so the *Jews* and *Christians* did more, and never seem to have doubted of the truth of any part of theirs. In short, whatever can be said of the traditional authority due to the *Greek* and *Roman* writers, something analogous to this, and for the most part of greater weight, may be urged for the *Jewish* and *Christian*. Now, I suppose that all sober-minded men admit the books usually
ascribed

ascribed to the *Greek* and *Roman* historians, philosophers, &c. to be genuine, and the principal facts related or alluded to in them to be true, and that one chief evidence for this is the general traditionary one here recited. They ought therefore to pay the same regard to the books of the Old and New Testaments, since there are the same or greater reasons for it.

Secondly, If we reconsider the circumstance recited in the last paragraph, it will appear, that these traditionary evidences are sufficient ones; and we shall have a real argument, as well as one *ad hominem*, for receiving books so handed down to us. For it is not to be conceived, that whole nations should either be imposed upon themselves, or concur to deceive others, by forgeries of books or facts. These books and facts must therefore, in general, be genuine and true; and it is a strong additional evidence of this, that all nations must be jealous of forgeries, for the same reasons that we are.

Here it may be objected, that as we reject the prodigies related by the *Greek* and *Roman* writers, though we admit the common history, so we ought also to reject the scripture miracles. To this I answer,

First, That the scripture history is supported by far stronger evidences than the *Greek* or *Roman*, as will appear in the following propositions.

Secondly, That many of the scripture miracles are related by eye-witnesses, and were of a public nature,
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of long duration, attended by great and lasting effects, inseparably connected with the common history, and evidently suitable to our notions of a wise and good Providence, which cannot be said of those related by the Pagan writers.

Thirdly, That the scripture miracles not attended by these cogent circumstances are supported by their connection with such as are; and that after we have admitted these, there remains no longer any presumption against those from their miraculous nature.

Fourthly, If there be any small number found amongst the Pagan miracles, attested by such like evidences as the principal ones for the scripture miracles, I do not see how they can be rejected; but it will not follow, that the scripture miracles are false, because some of the Pagan ones are true.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORIES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATENINGS, AND PROPHECIES CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE EVIDENCES BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS, AND OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS MENTIONED IN THEM.

THIS is one of the instances in which the evidences for the scriptures are superior, beyond comparison, to those for any other ancient books. Let us take a short review of this importance in its several particulars.

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The history of the creation, fall, deluge, longevity of the patriarchs, dispersion of mankind, calling of *Abraham*, descent of *Jacob* with his family into *Egypt*, and the precepts of abstaining from blood, and of circumcision, were of so much concern, either to mankind in general, or to the *Israelites* in particular, and some of them of so extraordinary a nature, as that it could not be an indifferent matter to the people amongst whom the account given of them in *Genesis* was first published, whether they received them or not. Suppose this account to be first published, amongst the *Israelites* by *Moses*, and also to be then confirmed by clear, universal, uninterrupted tradition (which is possible and probable, according to the history itself), and it will be easy to conceive, upon this true supposition, how this account should be handed down from age to age amongst the *Jews*, and received by them as indubitable. Suppose this account to be false, *i. e.* suppose that there were no such evidences and vestiges of these histories and precepts, and it will be difficult to conceive how this could have happened, let the time of publication be as it will. If early, the people would reject the account at once for want of a clear tradition, which the account itself would give them reason to expect. If late, it would be natural to inquire how the author came to be informed of things never known before to others.

If

If it be said, that he delivered them as communicated to him by revelation (which yet cannot well be said on account of the many references in *Genesis* to the remaining vestiges of the things related), these surprising, interesting particulars would at least be an embarrassment upon his fictitious credentials, and engage his contemporaries to look narrowly into them.

If it be said, that there were many cosmogonies and theogonies current amongst the Pagans, which yet are evidently fictions; I answer, that these were, in general, regarded only as amusing fictions; however that they had some truths in them, either expressed in plain words, or concealed in figures; and that their agreement with the book of *Genesis*, as far as they are consistent with one another, or have any appearance of truth, is a remarkable evidence in favour of this book. It is endless to make all the possible suppositions and objections of this kind; but it appears to me, that the more are made, the more will the truth and genuineness of the scriptures be established thereby.

It ought to be added, in relation to the precepts of abstaining from blood, and circumcision, before-mentioned, that if the first was common to mankind, or was known to have been so, the last peculiar to the descendants of *Abraham*, at the time of the publication of the book of *Genesis*, this confirms it; if otherwise, would contribute to make it rejected. If neither the practices themselves, nor any vestiges of them, subsisted at all, the book must be rejected. The
difficulty

difficulty of deducing these practices from the principles of human nature ought to be considered here; as it tends to prove their divine original, agreeably to the accounts given of them in *Genesis*.

Let us next come to the law of *Moses*. This was extremely burthensome, expensive, severe, particularly upon the crime of idolatry, to which all mankind were then extravagantly prone, and absurd, according to the common judgment of mankind, in the instances of forbidding to provide themselves with horses for war, and commanding all the males of the whole nation to appear at *Jerusalem* three times in a year. At the same time, it claims a divine authority every where, and appeals to facts of the most notorious kinds, and to customs and ceremonies of the most peculiar nature, as the memorials of these facts. We cannot conceive, then, that any nation, with such motives to reject, and such opportunities of detecting, the forgery of the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, should yet receive them, and submit to this heavy yoke. That they should often throw it off in part, and for a time, and rebel against the divine authority of their law, though sufficiently evidenced, is easily to be accounted for from what we see and feel in ourselves and others every day; but that they should ever return and repent, ever submit to it, unless it had divine authority, is utterly incredible. It was not a matter of such small importance, as that they could content themselves with a superficial examination,

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with a less examination than would be sufficient to detect so notorious a forgery; and this holds, at whatever time we suppose these books to be published.

That the *jews* did thus submit to the law of *Moses*, is evident from the books of the Old and New Testaments, if we allow them the least truth and genuineness, or even from profane writers; nay, I may say, from the present observance of it by the *jews* scattered through all the kingdoms of the world.

If it be said, that other nations have ascribed divine authority to their lawgivers, and submitted to very severe laws; I answer, first, That the pretences of lawgivers amongst the pagans to inspiration, and the submission of the people to them, may be accounted for in the degree in which they are found, from the circumstances of things, without having recourse to real inspiration; and particularly, that if we admit the patriarchal revelations related and intimated by *Moses*, and his own divine legation, it will appear that the heathen lawgivers copied after these; which is a strong argument for admitting them. Secondly, That there is no instance amongst the pagans, of a body of laws being produced at once, and remaining without addition afterwards; but that they were compiled by degrees, according to the exigencies of the state, the prevalence of a particular faction, or the authority of some particular persons, who were styled lawgivers, as *Draco* and *Solon* at *Athens*: that they were made, in general, not to curb, but humour,
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the genius of the people ; and were afterwards repealed and altered from the same causes ; whereas the body politic of the *Israelites* took upon itself a complete form at once, and has preserved this form in great measure to the present time, and that under the highest external disadvantages ; which is an instance quite without parallel, and shews the great opinion which they had of their law, *i. e.* its great importance to them.

If it be said, that the laws of the *Israelites* were not perhaps imposed at once, but grew up by degrees, as in other nations, this will make the difficulty of receiving the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, in which the contrary, with all the particular circumstances, is asserted, greater than ever. In short, of all the fictions or forgeries that can happen amongst any people, the most improbable is that of their body of civil laws ; and it seems to be utterly impossible in the case of the law of *Moses*.

The next part of the scriptures, whose importance we are to consider, is the history contained in the books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Ruth*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, and extending from the death of *Moses* to the re-establishment of the *jews* after the *babylonish* captivity, by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. Now in this history are the following important facts, most of which must be supposed to leave such vestiges of themselves, either external visible ones, or internal in the minds and memories of the people, as would

verify them, if true ; make them be rejected, if false.
 The conquest of the land of *Canaan*, the division of
 it, and the appointment of cities for the priests and
 levites by *Jeshua* ; the frequent slaveries of the *Isra-*
elites to the neighbouring kings, and their deliverance
 by the Judges ; the erection of a kingdom by *Samuel* ;
 the translation of this kingdom from *Saul's* family to
David, with his conquests ; the glory of *Solomon's*
 kingdom ; the building of the temple ; the division of the
 kingdom ; the idolatrous worship set up at *Dan* and
Bethel ; the captivity of the *Israelites* by the kings of
Affyria ; the captivity of the jews by *Nebuchadnezzar* ;
 the destruction of their temple ; their return under
Cyrus, rebuilding the temple under *Darius Hystaspes*,
 and re-establishment under *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, by
Ezra and *Nehemiah* ; these events are some of them
 the most shameful that can well happen to any peo-
 ple. How can we reconcile forgeries of such oppo-
 site kinds, and especially as they are interwoven to-
 gether ? But, indeed, the facts are of such conse-
 quence, notoriety, and permanency in their effects,
 that neither could any particular persons amongst the
Israelites first project the design of feigning them, nor
 their own people concur with such a design, nor the
 neighbouring nations permit the fiction to pass.
 Nothing could make a jealous multitude amongst the
Israelites or neighbouring nations acquiesce, but the
 invincible evidence of the facts here alleged. And the
 same observations hold of numberless other facts of
 lesser note, which it would be tedious to recount ; and
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of miraculous facts as much, or rather more than others. Besides which, it is to be noted, that all these have such various necessary connections with each other, that they cannot be separated, as has been already remarked.

And all this will, I presume, be readily acknowledged, upon supposition that the several books were published in or near the times of the facts therein recorded. But say the objectors, this will not hold in these times. Let us take an extreme case then, and suppose all these historical books forged by *Ezra*. But this is evidently impossible. Things of so important and notorious a kind, so glorious and so shameful to the people, for whose sake they were forged, would have been rejected with the utmost indignation, unless there were the strongest and most genuine footsteps of these things already amongst the people. They were therefore in part true. But many additions were made by *Ezra*, say the objectors. I answer if these were of importance, the difficulty returns. If not, then all the important facts are true. Besides, what motive could any one have for making additions, of no importance? Again, if there were any ancient writings extant, *Ezra* must either copy after them, which destroys the present supposition; or differ from and oppose them, which would betray him. If there were no such writings, the people could not but inquire in matters of importance, for what reasons *Ezra* was so particular in things of which there was neither

any memory, nor account in writing. If it be said, that the people did not regard what *Ezra* had thus forged, but let it pass uncontradicted; this is again to make the things of small or no importance. Besides, why should *Ezra* write, if no one would read or regard? Farther, *Ezra* must, like all other men, have friends, enemies and rivals; and some or all of these would have been a check upon him, and a security against him in matters of importance.

If, instead of supposing *Ezra* to have forged all these books at once, we suppose them forged successively, one, two, or three centuries after the facts related; we shall, from this intermediate supposition, have (besides the difficulty of accounting for such a regular succession of impostures in matters so important) a mixture of the difficulties recited in the two preceding paragraphs, the sum total of which will be the same, or nearly the same, as in either of those cases. And, upon the whole, the forgery of the annals of the *Israelites* appears to be impossible, as well as that of the body of their civil laws.

If it be said, that the histories and annals of other nations have many fictions and falsehoods in them; I answer, that the superior importance of the events which happened to the *jewish* nation, and the miraculous nature of many of them, occasioned their being recorded at the then present times, in the way of simple narration, the command of God also concurring, as it seems; and that thus all addition, variety,

and

and embellishment, was prevented: whereas the histories of the originals of other nations were not committed to writing till long after the events, after they had been corrupted and obscured by numberless fables and fictions, as is well known. There are many other circumstances peculiar to the *jewish* history, which establish its truth even in the minutest things as I shall shew in the following propositions; and I hope the reader will see, in the progress of the argument, that the same method of reasoning which proves the *jewish* history to be rigorously exact, proves also, that the histories of other nations may be expected to be partly true, and partly false, as they are agreed to be by all learned and sober-minded men.

I pass over the books of *Esther*, *Job*, the *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Canticles*, as not having much relation to this proposition; and proceed to the consideration of the Prophecies.

These contain the most important precepts, promises, threatenings, and predictions, *i. e.* prophecies peculiarly so called, besides the indirect and incidental mention of the great events recorded in the historical books. And as they are full of the severest reproofs and denunciations against all ranks, king, governors and great men subordinate to him, priests, prophets, and people, one cannot expect, that they should be favourably received by any, but those of the best moral characters: and these must be the first to detect and expose a forgery, if there was any. So that the prophecies

prophecies, if they were forgeries, could not be able to stand so rigorous an examination as the importance of the case would prompt all ranks to. And here all the arguments before used to shew, that the historical books could neither be forged at the time of the facts, nor so late as *Ezra's* time, nor in any intermediate one, are applicable with the same or even greater force. Besides which, it is to be observed of the predictions in particular, that, if they were published before the events, they could not be forgeries; if afterwards, there would not be wanting amongst the *jews* many persons of the same disposition with *Porphry*, and the present objectors to the genuineness of the prophecies, and the truth of the facts related or implied in them, who upon that supposition would have met with success, as *Porphry*, and the ancient objectors would have done long ago, had their objections been solid. Infidelity is the natural and necessary product of human wickedness and weakness; we see it, in all other things, as well as in religion, whenever the interests and passions of men are opposite to truth; and the present objectors to the truth of revealed religion may be assured, that the ancient ones, the murmuring *Israelites* in the wilderness, the rebellious *jews* before Christ, and both *jews* and *gentiles* since Christ, have done justice to their cause.

We come in the last place, to consider the importance of the books of the Old and New Testament.

Whoever

Whoever then received these in ancient times as genuine and true, must not only forsake all sinful pleasures, but expose himself to various hardships and dangers, and even to death itself. They had indeed a future glory promised to them, with which the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared. But then this glory, being future, must be supported with the most incontestable evidences; else it could have no power against the opposite motives; and both together must so rouse the mind, as to make men exert themselves to the uttermost, till they had received full satisfaction. Besides which, it is to be observed, that even joy, and the greatness of an expectation, incline men to disbelieve, and to examine with a scrupulous exactness, as well as fear and dislike.

As to those who did not receive the doctrines of the New Testament, and the facts there related and implied, they would have sufficient motives to detect the forgery or falsehood, had there been any such. They were all condemned for their unbelief; many for their gross vices; the *jew* for his darling partiality to his own nation, and ceremonial law; and the *gentile* for his idolatry and polytheism; and the most dreadful punishments threatened to all in a future state. Now these were important charges, and alarming considerations, which, if they did not put men upon a fair examination, would, at least, make them desirous to find fault, to detect and expose, and, if they

they had discovered any fraud, to publish it with the utmost triumph. The books of the New Testament could not but be of so much importance to the unbelievers of the primitive times, as to excite them to vigilance and earnestness, in endeavouring to discredit and destroy them. All which is abundantly confirmed by the history of those times. And indeed cases of the same kind, though not of the same degree, occur now to daily observation, which the reader will do well to call to mind. Thus it comes to pass, on one hand, that frauds and impostures are crushed in the birth; and, on the other, that wicked men labour against the truth in the most unreasonable and inconsistent ways, and are led on from one degree of obstinacy, prevarication, and infatuation, to another, without limits.

It may be added here, that the persons reprov'd and condemn'd in the gospel, in the *Acts* of the apostles, by St. *Paul* in his epistles, by St. *Peter* in his second epistle, by St. *John* and St. *Jude* in their epistles, and by St. *John* in the *Revelation*, viz. the five churches, and the *Nicolaitants*, could not but endeavour to vindicate themselves. The books were all of a public nature, and these reproofs particularly so, as being intended to guard others.

I have now gone through the several parts of the scripture, and shewn briefly how the importance of each would be a security against forgery and fiction in that part. I will now add some general evidences to the same purpose.

First,

First, then, It is certain, that both *jews* and *christians* have undergone the severest persecutions and sufferings on account of their sacred books, and yet never could be prevailed with to deliver them up; which shews that they thought them of the highest importance, most genuine and true.

Secondly, The preservation of the law of *Moses*, which is probably the first book that was ever written in any language, while so many others more modern have been lost, shews the great regard paid to it. The same holds in a less degree of most of the other books of the Old Testament, since most of them are ancienter than the oldest *Greek* historians. And as the records of all the neighbouring nations are lost; we must suppose those of the *jews* to have been preserved, from their importance, or some other such cause, as may be an equal evidence of their genuineness and truth.

Thirdly, The great importance of all the sacred books appears from the many early translations and paraphrases of them. The same translations and paraphrases must be an effectual means of securing their integrity and purity, if we could suppose any design to corrupt them.

Fourthly, The hesitation and difficulty with which a few books of the New Testament were received into the canon, shew the great care and concern of the primitive christians about their canon, *i. e.* the high importance of the books received into it; and

and are therefore a strong evidence, first, for the genuineness and truth of the books which were received without hesitation; and then for these others, since they were received universally at last.

Fifthly. The great religious hatred and animosity which subsisted between the *jews* and *Samaritans*, and between several of the ancient sects amongst the christians, shew of what importance they all thought their sacred books; and would make them watch over one another with a jealous eye.

THE LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND MANNER OF
WRITING USED IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD
AND NEW TESTAMENTS, ARE ARGUMENTS
OF THEIR GENUINENESS.

HERE I observe, First, that the *Hebrew* language, in which the Old Testament was written, being the language of an ancient people, and one that had little intercourse with their neighbours, and whose neighbours also spake a language that had great affinity with their own, would not change so fast as modern languages have done, since nations have been variously mixed with one another, and trade, arts, and sciences, greatly extended. Yet some changes there must be in passing from the time of *Moses* to that of *Malachi*. Now, I apprehend, that the Biblical *Hebrew* corresponds to this criterion with so much exactness, that a considerable argument may be deduced thence in favour of the genuineness of the books of the Old Testament.

Secondly,

Secondly, The books of the Old Testament have too considerable a diversity of style to be the work either of one *jew* (for a *jew* he must be on account of the language), or of any set of cotemporary *jews*. If therefore they be all forgeries, there must be a succession of impostors in different ages, who have concurred to impose upon posterity, which is inconceivable. To suppose part forged, and part genuine, is very harsh, neither would this supposition, if admitted, be satisfactory.

Thirdly, The *Hebrew* language ceased to be spoken, as a living language, soon after the time of the *Babylonish* captivity: but it would be difficult or impossible to forge any thing in it, after it was become a dead language. For there was no grammar made for the *Hebrew* till many ages after; and, as it is difficult to write in a dead language with exactness, even by the help of a grammar, so it seems impossible without it. All the books of the Old Testament must therefore be, nearly, as ancient as the *Babylonish* captivity; and, since they could not all be written in the same age, some must be considerably more ancient; which would bring us again to a succession of conspiring impostors.

Fourthly, This last remark may perhaps afford a new argument for the genuineness of the book of *Daniel*, if any were wanting. But indeed the Septuagint translation shews both this, and all the other books of the Old Testament to have been considered

as ancient books, soon after the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, at least.

Fifthly, There is a simplicity of style, and an unaffected manner of writing, in all the books of the Old Testament; which is a very strong evidence of their genuineness, even exclusively of the suitableness of this circumstance to the times of the supposed authors.

Sixthly, The style of the New Testament is also simple and unaffected, and perfectly suited to the time, place, and persons. Let it be observed farther, that the use of words and phrases is such, also the ideas, and method of reasoning, as that the books of the New Testament could be written by none but persons originally *jews*; which would bring the inquiry into a little narrower compass, if there was any occasion for this.

One may also observe, that the narrations and precepts of both Old and New Testament are delivered without hesitation; the writers teach as having authority; which circumstance is peculiar to those, who have both a clear knowledge of what they deliver, and a perfect integrity of heart.

THE VERY GREAT NUMBER OF PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF TIME, PLACE, PERSONS, &c. MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE ARGUMENTS BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THAT the reader may understand what I mean by these particular circumstances, I will recite some of the principal heads, under which they may be classed.

There are then mentioned in the book of *Genesis*, the rivers of paradise, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumstances, the place where the ark rested, the building of the tower of *Babel*, the confusion of tongues, the dispersion of mankind, or the division of the earth amongst the posterity of *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japhet*, the generations of the postdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual shortening of human life after the flood, the sojournings of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, with many particulars of the state of *Canaan*, and the neighbouring countries, in their times, the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the state of the land of *Edom*, both before and after *Esau*'s time, and the descent of *Jacob* into *Egypt*, with the state of *Egypt* before *Moses*'s time.

In the book of *Exodus* are the plagues of *Egypt*, the institution of the passover, the passage through the *Red Sea*, with the destruction of *Pharaoh* and his

host there, the miracle of manna, the victory over the *Amalekites*, the solemn delivery of the law from mount *Sinai*, many particular laws both moral and ceremonial, the worship of the golden calf, and a very minute description of the tabernacle, priests' garments, ark, &c.

In *Leviticus* we have a collection of ceremonial laws, with all their particularities, and an account of the deaths of *Nadab* and *Abihu*.

The book of *Numbers* contains the first and second numberings of the several tribes with their genealogies, the peculiar offices of the three several families of the *Levites*, many ceremonial laws, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderness during forty years, with the relation of some remarkable events which happened in this period; as the searching of the land, the rebellion of *Korah*, the victories over *Arad*, *Sion*, and *Og*, with the division of the kingdoms of the two last among the *Gadites*, *Reubenites*, and *Manassites*, the history of *Balak* and *Balaam*, and the victory over the *Midianites*, all described with the several particularities of time, place, and persons.

The book of *Deuteronomy* contains a recapitulation of many things contained in the three last books, with a second delivery of the law, chiefly the moral one, by *Moses*, upon the borders of *Canaan*, just before his death, with an account of this.

In

In the book of *Joshua*, we have the passage over *Jordan*, the conquest of the land of *Canaan* in detail, and the division of it among the tribes, including a minute geographical description.

The book of *Judges* recites a great variety of public transactions, with the private origin of some. In all, the names of times, places, and persons, both among the *Israelites*, and the neighbouring nations, are noted with particularity and simplicity.

In the book of *Ruth* is a very particular account of the genealogy of *David*, with several incidental circumstances.

The books of *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, contain the transactions of the kings before the captivity, and governors afterwards, all delivered in the same circumstantial manner. And here the particular account of the regulations sacred and civil established by *David*, and of the building of the temple by *Solomon*, the genealogies given in the beginning of the first book of *Chronicles*, and the lists of the persons who returned, sealed, &c. after the captivity, in the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, deserve especial notice, in the light in which we are now considering things.

The book of *Esther* contains a like account of a very remarkable event, with the institution of a festival in memory of it.

The book of *Psalms* mentions many historical facts in an incidental way; and this, with the books of

Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, allude to the manners and customs of ancient times in various ways.

In the *Prophecies* there are some historical relations; and in the other parts the indirect mention of facts, times, places, and persons, is interwoven with the predictions in the most copious and circumstantial manner.

If we come to the New Testament, the same observations present themselves at first view. We have the names of friends and enemies, *Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, obscure and illustrious, the times, places, and circumstances of facts, specified directly, and alluded to indirectly, with various references to the customs and manners of those times.

Now here I observe, First, That, in fact, we do not ever find, that forged or false accounts of things superabound thus in particularities. There is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related, and they always seem to bear some proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and persons, in *Manetho's* account of the *Egyptian* Dynasties, *Ctesias's* of the *Assyrian* kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of *Greece*; and, agreeably thereto, these accounts have much fiction and falsehood, with some truth: whereas *Thucydides's* history of the *Peloponnesian* war, and *Cæsar's* of the war in *Gaul*, in both which the particulars

particulars of time, place, and persons, are mentioned, are universally esteemed true to a great degree of exactness.

Secondly, A forger, or a relater of falsehoods, would be careful not to mention so great a number of particulars, since this would be to put into his reader's hands criterions whereby to detect him. Thus we may see one reason of the fact mentioned in the last paragraph, and which in confirming that fact, confirms the proposition here to be proved.

Thirdly, A forger, or a relater of falsehoods, could scarce furnish out such lists of particulars. It is easy to conceive how faithful records kept from time to time by persons concerned in the transactions should contain such lists; nay, it is natural to expect them in this case, from that local memory which takes strong possession of the fancy in those who have been present at transactions; but it would be a work of the highest invention, and greatest stretch of genius, to raise from nothing such numberless particularities, as are almost every where to be met with in the scriptures. The account given of memory, imagination, and invention, in the foregoing part of these observations, sets this matter in a strong light.

There is a circumstance relating to the gospels, which deserves particular notice in this place. St. *Matthew* and St. *John* were apostles; and therefore, since they accompanied Christ, must have this local memory of his journeyings and miracles. St. *Mark* was

was a *jew* of *Judea*, and a friend of *St. Peter's*, and therefore may either have had this local memory himself, or have written chiefly from *St. Peter*, who had. But *St. Luke*, being a profelyte of *Antioch*, not converted perhaps till several years after *Christ's* resurrection, and receiving his accounts from different eye-witnesses, as he says himself, could have no regard to that order of time, which a local memory would suggest. Let us see how the gospels answer to these positions. *St. Matthew's* then appears to be in exact order of time, and to be a regulator to *St. Mark's*, and *St. Luke's*, shewing *St. Mark's* to be nearly so, but *St. Luke's* to have little or no regard to the order of time in his account of *Christ's* ministry. *St. John's* gospel is, like *St. Matthew's*, in order of time; but as he wrote after all the rest, and with a view only of recording some remarkable particulars, such as *Christ's* actions before he left *Judea* to go to preach in *Galilee*, his disputes with the *jews* of *Jerusalem*, and his discourses to the apostles at his last supper, there was less opportunity for his local memory to shew itself. However, his recording what past before *Christ's* going into *Galilee* might be in part from this cause, as *St. Matthew's* omission of it was probably from his want of this local memory. For it appears, that *St. Matthew* resided in *Galilee*; and that he was not converted till some time after *Christ's* coming thither to preach. Now this suitableness of the four gospels to their reputed authors,

authors, in a circumstance of so subtle and reclusive a nature, is quite inconsistent with the supposition of fiction or forgery. This remark is chiefly taken from Sir *Isaac Newton's* chapter concerning the times of the birth and passion of Christ, in his comment on *Daniel*.

Fourthly, If we could suppose the persons who forged the books of the Old and New Testaments, to have furnished their readers with the great variety of particulars above-mentioned, notwithstanding the two reasons here alleged against it, we cannot, however, conceive, but that the persons of those times when the books were published, must, by the help of these criterions, have detected and exposed the forgeries or falsehoods. For these criterions are so attested by allowed facts, as at this time, and in this remote corner of the world, to establish the truth and genuineness of the scriptures, as may appear even from this chapter, and much more from the writings of commentators, sacred critics, and such other learned men, as have given the historical evidences for revealed religion in detail; and by parity of reason they would suffice even now to detect the fraud, were there any: whence we may conclude, *a fortiori*, that they must have enabled the persons who were upon the spot, when the books were published, to do this; and the importance of many of these particulars considered under the last head but one, would furnish them with abundant motives for this purpose. And
upon

upon the whole I infer, that the very great number of particulars of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the scriptures, is a proof of their genuineness and truth, even previously to the consideration of the agreement of these particulars with history, natural and civil, and with one another, of which I now proceed to treat.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH
HISTORY, NATURAL AND CIVIL, IS A PROOF
OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THUS the history of the fall agrees in an eminent manner both with the obvious facts of labour, sorrow, pain, and death, with what we see and feel every day, and with all our philosophical inquiries into the frame of the human mind, the nature of social life, and the origin of evil, as may appear from these papers amongst other writings of the same kind. The several powers of the little world within a man's own breast are at variance with one another, as well as those of the great world: we are utterly unable to give a complete solution of the origin of the evils which flow from these discords, and from the jarring of the elements of the natural world; and yet there are comfortable hopes, that all evil will be overpowered and annihilated at last, and that it has an entire subserviency to good really and ultimately, *i. e.* though the *serpent cruise our heel*, yet we shall *bruise its head*.

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It cannot be denied indeed, but that both the history of the creation, and that of the fall, are attended with great difficulties. But then they are not of such a kind as intimate them to be a fiction contrived by *Moses*. It is probable, that he set down the traditional account, such as he received it from his ancestors; and that this account contains the literal truth in short, though so concealed in certain particulars through its shortness, and some figurative expressions made use of, that we cannot yet, perhaps never shall, interpret it satisfactorily. However, Mr. Whiston's conjectures concerning the six days creation seem to deserve the attention of future inquirers; and there is great plausibility in supposing with him, that the first chapter of *Genesis* contains a narrative of the succession of visible appearances.

One may suppose also, that there is a typical and prophetic sense to be discovered hereafter, relative perhaps to the six millenniums, which are to precede a seventh sabbatical one; and that the words are more accommodated to this sense than to the literal one, in some places, which I think holds in many of the prophecies that have double senses. However, there is no appearance of any motive to a fraud, either in the history of the creation or fall, nor any mark of one. And the same shortness and obscurity which prevents our being able to explain, seems also to preclude objections. If we suppose these histories to have been delivered by traditional explanations that accompanied hieroglyphical

hieroglyphical delineations, this would perhaps account for some of the difficulties ; and help us to conceive how the histories may be exact, and even decipherable hereafter. The appellations of the tree of life, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the serpent, seem to favour this supposition. At the utmost, one can make no objections against these histories, but what are consistent with the first and lowest of the suppositions above-mentioned concerning divine inspiration.

Natural history bears a strong testimony to *Moses's* account of the deluge ; and shews that it must have been universal, or nearly so, however difficult it may be to us, either to find sources for so great a body of waters, or methods of removing them. That a comet had some share in this event seems highly probable from what *Dr. Halley* and *Mr. Whiston* have observed of this matter : I guess also partly from the supposition, that some part of the tail of a comet was then attracted by the earth, and deposited there, partly from the great shortening of human life after the flood, and partly from the fermenting and inebriating quality of vegetable juices, which seems first to have appeared immediately after the flood, that a great change was made at the time of the flood in the constitution of natural bodies, and particularly in that of water. And it seems not improbable to me, that an enlargement of the respective spheres of attraction and repulsion, and of the force of these, in
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the small particles of water, might greatly contribute to account for some circumstances of the deluge, mentioned by *Moses*. For, by the increase of the sphere, and force of attraction, the waters suspended in the air or firmament in the form of a mist or vapour before the flood, *see Gen. ii. 5, 6.* might be collected into large drops, and fall upon the earth. And their fall might give occasion to rarer watery vapours, floating at great distances from the earth in the planetary and intermundane spaces, to approach it, be in like manner condensed into large drops, and fall upon it. This might continue for forty days, the force with which the rare vapours approached the earth decreasing all the latter part of that time, and being at the end of it overpowered by the contrary force of the vapours raised from the earth, now covered with water, by the action of the sun, and of the wind, mentioned *Gen. viii. 1.* For it is evident, that the wind has great power in raising watery particles, *i. e.* putting them into a state of repulsion; and the wind here considered would be far stronger than that which now prevails in the *Pacific Ocean*, since the whole globe was one great ocean during the height of the deluge. The cessation of the rain, and the increase of the sphere, and force of repulsion, above supposed, would in like manner favour the ascent of vapours from this great ocean. And thus the present vapours might be driven by subsequent ones into the planetary and intermundane spaces, beyond the

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earth's attraction. However, since the quantity of the subsequent vapours must perpetually decrease by the decrease of the surface of the ocean, a limit would be set to the ascent of the vapours, as was before to their descent.

According to this hypothesis, that state of our waters, which was superinduced at the deluge, may both be the cause of the rainbow, *i. e.* of drops of a size proper for this purpose, and exempt us from the danger of a second deluge. For a fresh intermixture of like cometical particles could not now superinduce a new state. The rainbow may therefore be a natural sign and evidence, *that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy the earth.*

As to the breaking up the fountains of the great deep, mentioned *Gen. vii. 11.* though no satisfactory account has been given of this hitherto, yet surely there is great plausibility in supposing, that the increased attraction of a comet, consequent upon its near approach to the earth, might have some such effect, and at the same time contribute to produce such changes in the earth, as a mere deluge could not.

Civil history affords likewise many evidences, which support the *Mosaic* account of the deluge. Thus, First, We find from pagan authors, that the tradition of a flood was general, or even universal. Secondly, The paucity of mankind, and the vast tracts of uninhabited land, which are mentioned in the accounts

of

of the first ages, shew that mankind are late'y sprung from a small stock, and even suit the time assigned by *Moses* for the flood. Thirdly, The great number of small kingdoms, and petty states in the first ages, and the late rise of the great empires of *Egypt*, *Assyria*, *Babylon*, &c. concur to the same purpose. Fourthly, The invention and progress of arts and sciences concur likewise. And this last favours the *Mosaic* history of the antediluvians. For as he mentions little of their arts, so it appears from the late invention of them after the flood, that those who were preserved from it were possessed of few.

It has been objected to the *Mosaic* history of the deluge, that the ark could not contain all the animals which are now found upon the earth, with the proper provisions for them during the time of the deluge. But this, upon an accurate computation, has been proved to be otherwise; so that what was thought an objection is even some evidence. For it is extremely improbable, that a person who had feigned the particular of the ark, should have come so near the proper dimensions. It is to be considered here, that the several specieses of both plants and brute animals, which differ from each other by small degrees, seem to be multiplied every day by the varieties of climates, culture, diet, mixture, &c. also, that if we suppose an universal deluge, the ark, with the entrance of the animals, &c. seem necessary also. For as we can trace up the first imperfect rudiments of the art

of shipping amongst the *Greeks*, there could be no shipping before the flood; consequently no animals could be saved. Nay, it is highly improbable, that even men, and domestic animals, could be saved, not to mention wild beasts, serpents, &c. though we should suppose, that the antediluvians had shipping, unless we suppose also, that they had a divine intimation and directions about it; such as *Moses* relates; which would be to give up the cause of infidelity at once.

It has been objected likewise, that the *Negro* nations differ so much from the *Europeans*, that they do not seem to have descended from the same ancestors. But this objection has no solid foundation. We cannot presume to say what alterations climate, air, water, soil, customs, &c. can or cannot produce. It is no ways to be imagined, that all the national difference in complexion, features, make of the bones, &c. require so many different originals; on the contrary, we have reason from experience to assert, that various changes of this kind are made by the incidents of life, just as was observed, in the last paragraph, of plants, and brute animals. And, with respect to the different complexions of different nations, Dr. *Mitchell* has shewn with great appearance of truth, *Phil. Transf. Numb. 474.* that these arise from external influences. It will confirm this, if it be found, that the *jews*, by residing in any country for some generations, approach to the complexion

of the original natives. At the same time we must observe from the history of distempers, that acquired dispositions may be transmitted to the descendents for some generations; which is perhaps one of the great truths intimated in the account of the fall. And thus the children of *Negroes* may be black, though born and bred up in a country where the original natives are not so.

A third objection is, that it is difficult to account for the original of the *Americans*, and for the wild beasts and serpents that are found in that quarter of the world, according to the *Mosaic* history. But to this one may answer, First, That *America* may be even now contiguous to the north-east part of *Asia*. Secondly, That it might have been contiguous to other parts of our great continent for some centuries after the deluge, though that contiguity be since broken off. Thirdly, That the first sailors, who ventured out of the streights, or others, might be driven, by stress of weather, and their own ignorance, first within the influence of the trade-winds, and then to some part of *America*. One can offer nothing certain on either side, in respect of these points. However, it seems to me, that many customs found amongst the *Negroes* and *Americans* are stronger evidences, that they are of the same original with the *Asiatics* and *Europeans*, than any which have yet appeared to the contrary. And, upon the whole, I conclude certainly, that the *Mosaic* account of the

deluge is much confirmed by both natural and civil history, if we embrace the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration ; and has very strong presumptions for it, according to the second or third.

If we could suppose the high mountains in *South America* not to have been immersed in the deluge, we might the more easily account for the wild beasts, poisonous serpents, and curious birds of *America*. Might not the ark be driven round the globe during the deluge ? And might not *Noah* be aware of this, and observed that it had been immersed fifteen cubits in water ? And may not the *Mosaic* account be partly a narrative of what *Noah* saw, partly the conclusions which he must naturally draw from thence ? Thus the tops of some of the highest mountains might escape, consistently with the *Mosaic* account. The future inquiries of natural historians may perhaps determine this point.

The next great event recorded in *Genesis* is the confusion of languages. Now the *Mosaic* account of this appears highly probable, if we first allow that of the deluge. For it seems impossible to explain how the known languages should arise from one stock. Let any one try only in *Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and English*. The changes which have happened in languages since history has been certain, do not at all correspond to a supposition of this kind. There is too much of method and art in the *Greek* and *Latin* tongues for them to have been the inventions of a
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rude and barbarous people ; and they differ too much from *Hebrew, Arabic, &c.* to have flowed from them without design. As to the *Chinese*, it is difficult to make any probable conjectures about it, partly from its great heterogeneity in respect of other languages, partly because learned men have not yet examined it accurately. However, the most probable conjecture seems to be, that it is the language of *Noah's* post-diluvian posterity ; the least probable one, that it could have flowed naturally from any known language, or from the same stock with any ; which it must have done, if we admit the deluge, and yet reject the confusion of languages.

The dispersion of the three sons of *Noah* into different countries, related in the tenth chapter of *Genesis*, comes next under consideration, being a consequence, not the cause, of the diversity of languages. Now here antiquarians, and learned men, seem to be fully agreed, that the *Mosaic* account is confirmed, as much as can be expected in our present ignorance of the state of ancient nations. And it is to be observed of all the articles treated of under this proposition, that we, who live in the north-west corner of *Europe*, lie under great disadvantages in such researches. However, since those who have studied the oriental languages and histories, or have travelled into the eastern parts, have made many discoveries of late years, which have surprizingly confirmed the scripture accounts, one may hope and presume,

presume, that if either our learned men be hereafter suffered to have free access to those parts, or the natives themselves become learned, both which are surely probable in the highest degree, numberless unexpected evidences for the truth of the scripture history will be brought to light.

Let us next come to the state of religion in the ancient postdiluvian world, according to *Moses*, and the succeeding sacred historians. The postdiluvian patriarchs then appeared to have worshipped the one Supreme Being by sacrifices, but in a simple manner, and to have had frequent divine communications. By degrees their posterity fell off to idolatry, worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, deified dead men, and polluted themselves with the most impure and abominable institutions. The *Israelites* alone were kept to the worship of the true God, and even they were often infected by their idolatrous neighbours. Now all this is perfectly agreeable to what we find in pagan history. The idolatries of the pagans are acknowledged on all hands. It appears also from pagan history, that they grew up by degrees, as the scriptures intimate. All the pagan religions appear to have had the worship of one god superior to the rest, as their common foundation. They all endeavoured to render him propitious by sacrifice; which surely cannot be an human invention, nor a custom, which, if invented in one nation, would be readily propagated to another. They all joined mediatorial
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and inferior, also local and tutelar deities to the one god. And they all taught the frequency of divine communications. Hence the pagan religions appear to be merely the degenerated offspring of patriarchal revelations, and to infer them as their cause. Hence the pretences of kings, lawgivers, priests, and great men, to inspiration, with the credulity of the multitude. That there had been divine communications, was beyond dispute; and therefore all that reluctance to admit them, which appears in the present age, was over-ruled. At first there were no impostors. When therefore they did arise, it would not be easy for the multitude to distinguish between those who had really divine communications, and those who only pretended to them; till at last all real inspiration having ceased among the gentile world, their several religions kept possession merely by the force of education, fraud in the priests, and fear in the people; and even these supports began to fail at last, about the time of Christ's coming. And thus many things, which have been thought to weaken the evidences for the scripture accounts, are found to strengthen them, by flowing naturally from that state of religion in ancient times, and from that only, which the scripture delivers.

A farther confirmation of the same scripture accounts of the flood, dispersion of mankind, and patriarchal revelations, may be had from the following very remarkable particular: it appears from history, that

that the different nations of the world have had, *cæteris paribus*, more or less knowlege, civil and religious, in proportion as they were nearer to, or had more intimate communication with *Egypt*, *Palæstine*, *Chalcæa*, and the other countries, that were inhabited by the most eminent persons amongst the first descendents of *Noah*, and by those who are said in scripture to have had particular revelations made to them by God; and that the first inhabitants of the extreme parts of the world, reckoning *Palæstine* as the centre, were in general mere savages. Now all this is utterly inexplicable upon the footing of infidelity, of the exclusion of all divine communications. Why should not human nature be as sagacious, and make as many discoveries, civil and religious, at the Cape of *Good Hope*, or in *America*, as in *Egypt*, *Palæstine*, *Mesopotamia*, *Greece*, or *Rome*? Nay, why should *Palæstine* so far exceed them all, as it did confessedly? Allow the scripture accounts, and all will be clear and easy. Mankind, after the flood, were first dispersed from the plains of *Mesopotamia*. Some of the chief heads of families settled there, in *Palæstine*, and in *Egypt*. *Palæstine* had afterwards extraordinary divine illuminations bestowed upon its inhabitants, the *Israelites* and *jews*. Hence its inhabitants had the purest notions of God, and the wisest civil establishment. Next after them come the *Egyptians* and *Chaldæans*, who, not being removed from their first habitations, and living in fertile countries watered by the

the *Nile*, *Tigris*, and *Euphrates*, may be supposed to have preserved more both of the antediluvian and postdiluvian revelations, also to have had more leisure for invention, and a more free communication with the *Israelites* and *jews*, than any other nations; whereas those small parties, which were driven farther and farther from each other into the extremes of heat and cold, entirely occupied in providing necessaries for themselves, and also cut off by rivers, mountains, or distance, from all communication with *Palæstine*, *Egypt*, and *Chaldea*, would lose much of their original stock, and have neither inclination nor ability to invent more.

Let us now consider the history of particular facts, and inquire what attestations we can produce from pagan history for the scripture accounts of *Abraham* and his posterity the *Israelites* and *jews*. We cannot expect much here, partly because these things are of a private nature, if compared to the universal deluge, partly because the pagan history is either deficient, or grossly corrupted with fable and fiction, till we come to the times of the declension of the kingdoms of *Israel* and *Judah*. However, some faint traces there are in ancient times, and many concurring circumstances in succeeding ones; and, as soon as the pagan records come to be clear and certain, we have numerous and strong confirmations of the sacred history. Thus the history of *Abraham* seems to have transpired in some measure. It is also probable

ble, that the ancient *Brachmans* were of his posterity by *Keturah*, that they derived their name from him, and worshipped the true God only. *Moses* is mentioned by many heathen writers, and the accounts which they give of his conducting the *Israelites* from *Egypt* to *Canaan* are such as might be expected. The authors lived so long after *Moses*, and had so little opportunity or inclination to know the exact truth, or to be particular, that their accounts cannot invalidate the scripture history, though they do a little confirm it. The expulsion of the *Canaanites* by *Jashua* seems to have laid the foundation of the kingdom of the *shepherds* in the *Lower Egypt* mentioned by *Manetho*, and of the expulsion of the natives into the *Upper Egypt*; who, after some centuries drove the *shepherds* back again into *Canaan* about the time of *Saul*. The *Canaanites* mentioned by *St. Austin* and others, upon the coast of *Africa*, may be of the same original. See *Newton's Chronol.* page 198. We may conclude from the book of *Judges*, that there were many petty sovereignties in the neighbourhood of *Canaan*; and it appears from pagan history, as *Sir Isaac Newton* has rectified it, that the first great empire, that of *Egypt*, was not yet risen. When *David* subdued the *Philistines* or *Phanicians*, *Cadmus* and others seem to have fled into *Greece*, and to have carried letters with them, which the *Philistines* had probably learnt, about a generation before, from the copy of the law found in the ark taken from the

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Israelites. After *Solomon's* temple was built, the temple of *Vulcan* in *Egypt*, and others in other places, began to be built in imitation of it; just as the oracles of the heathens were imitations of God's communications to the *Israelites*, and particularly of that by *Urim* and *Thummim*. *Shishak*, who came out of *Egypt* in the fifth year of *Rehoboam*, is the *Sesostris* of *Herodotus*; and this point, being settled, becomes a capital pin, upon which all the pagan chronology depends. Hence *Herodotus's* list of the *Egyptian* kings is made probable and consistent. As we advance farther to the *Assyrian* monarchy, the scripture accounts agree with the profane ones rectified; and when we come still farther to the æra of *Nabonassar*, and to the kings of *Babylon* and *Persia*, which are posterior to this æra, and recorded in *Ptolemy's* canon, we find the agreement of sacred and profane history much more exact, there being certain criterions in the profane history for fixing the facts related in it. And it is remarkable, that not only the direct relations of the historical books, but the indirect, incidental mention of things in the prophecies, tallies with true chronology; which surely is such an evidence for their genuineness and truth, as cannot be called in question. And, upon the whole, it may be observed, that the sacred history is distinct, methodical, and consistent throughout; the profane utterly deficient in the first ages, obscure and full of

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fictions, in the succeeding ones ; and that it is but
 just clear and precise in the principal facts about the
 time that the sacred history ends. So that this cor-
 rects and regulates that, and renders it intelligible in
 many instances, which must otherwise be given up
 as utterly inexplicable. How then can we suppose
 the sacred history not to be genuine and true, or a
 wicked imposture to rise up, and continue not only
 undiscovered, but even to increase to a most auda-
 cious height, in a nation which of all others kept the
 most exact accounts of time ? I will add one remark
 more : this same nation, who may not have lost so
 much as one year from the creation of the world to the
Babylonish captivity, as soon as they were deprived of
 the assistance of prophets, became most inaccurate
 in their methods of keeping time, there being nothing
 more erroneous than the accounts of *Josephus*, and
 the modern *jews*, from the time of *Cyrus*, to that of
Alexander the Great ; notwithstanding that all the re-
 quisite assistances might easily have been borrowed
 from the neighbouring nations, who now kept regular
 annals. Hence it appears, that the exactness of the
 sacred history was owing to the divine assistance.

It is an evidence in favour of the scriptures, allied
 to those which I am here considering, that the man-
 ners of the persons mentioned in the scriptures have
 that simplicity and plainness, which is also ascribed to
 the first ages of the world by pagan writers ; and both

of them concur, by this, to intimate the novelty of the then present race, *i. e.* the deluge.

Besides these attestations from prophane history, we may consider the *jews* themselves as bearing testimony to this day, in all countries of the world, to the truth of their ancient history, *i. e.* to that of the Old and New Testaments. Allow this, and it will be easy to see how they should still persist in their attachment to that religion, those laws, and those prophecies, which so manifestly condemn them, both in past times, and in the present. Suppose any considerable alteration made in their ancient history, *i. e.* any such as may answer the purposes of infidelity, and their present state will be inexplicable.

The books of the New Testament are verified by history, in a manner still more illustrious; these books being written, and the facts mentioned therein transacted, during the times of *Augustus*, *Tiberius*, and the succeeding *Cæsars*. Here we may observe,

First, That the incidental mention of the *Roman* emperors, governors of *Judæa*, and the neighbouring provinces, the *jewish* high priests, sects of the *jews*, and their customs, of places, and of transactions, is found to be perfectly agreeable to the histories of those times. And as the whole number of these particulars is very great, they may be reckoned a full proof of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament; it being impossible for a person who had forged them, *i. e.* who was not an eye and ear wit-

ness, and otherwise concerned with the transactions as the books require, but who had invented many histories and circumstances, &c. not to have been deficient, superfluous and erroneous. No man's memory or knowledge is sufficient for such adaptation of feigned circumstances, and especially where the mention is incidental. Let any one consider how often the best poets fail in this, who yet endeavour not to vary from the manners and customs of the age of which they write; at the same time, that poetry neither requires nor admits so great a minuteness in the particular circumstances of time, place, and persons, as the writers of the New Testament have descended to naturally and incidentally.

Secondly, That Christ preached in *Judæa* and *Galilee*, made many disciples, and was crucified under *Pontius Pilate*, at the instigation of the chief men among the *jews*; also that his disciples preached after his death, not only in *Judæa*, but all over the *Roman* empire; that they converted multitudes, were persecuted, and at last suffered death, for their firm adherence to their master; and that both *Christ* and his disciples pretended to work many miracles; are facts attested by civil history in the amplest manner, and which cannot be called in question. Now these facts are so connected with the other facts mentioned in the New Testament, that they must stand or fall together. There is no probable account to be given of these facts, but by allowing the rest. For the proof of

of this, I appeal to every reader who will make the trial. It may also be concluded from the remarkable unwillingness of the present unbelievers to allow even the plainest facts in express terms. For it shews them to be apprehensive, that the connection between the several principal facts mentioned in the New Testament is inseparable, and that the attestation given to some by civil history may easily be extended to all.

It has been objected, that more mention ought to have been made of the common facts by the profane writers of those times, also some acknowledgment of the miraculous ones, had they been true. To this we may answer, First, That *Judæa* was but a small and distant province of the *Roman* empire, and the jews themselves, with whom the christians were for a long time confounded, much despised by the *Romans*. Secondly, That historians, politicians, generals, &c. have their imaginations so much pre-occupied by affairs of state, that matters purely religious are little regarded by them. *Gallio* cared for none of these things. Thirdly, That a person who attended in any great degree to the christian affairs, if a good man, could scarce avoid becoming a christian; after which his testimony ceases to be pagan, and becomes christian; of which I shall speak under the next head. Fourthly, That both those who were favourers of the christians, and those averse to them in a moderate degree, one of which must be the case with great numbers, would

have motives to be silent; the half christians would be silent for fear of being persecuted; and the others would affect to take no notice of what they disliked, but could not disprove; which is a fact that occurs to daily observation. Lastly, when these things are laid together, the attestations of the profane writers to the common facts appear to be such as one might expect, and their silence as to the miraculous ones is accounted for.

Thirdly, All the christian writers, from the time of the apostles and downwards, bear testimony to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and the truth of the facts, in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, and in such manner as might be expected. Their quotations from them are numberless, and agree sufficiently with the present copies. They go every where upon the supposition of the facts, as the foundation of all their discourses, writings, hopes, fears, &c. They discover every where the highest regard, and even veneration, both for the books and the authors. In short, one cannot see how this testimony in favour of the books of the New Testament can be invalidated, unless by supposing all the ecclesiastical writings of the first centuries to be forged also; or all the writers to have concurred to write as if they believed the genuineness and truth of these books, though they did not; or to have had no ability or inclination to distinguish genuineness and truth from forgery and falsehood; or by some other such supposition, as will scarce bear to be named.

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Here three questions may be asked, that bear some relation to this subject ; and the answers to which will, I think, illustrate and confirm what has been advanced in the last paragraph.

Thus, First, It may be asked, why we have not more accounts of the life of Christ transmitted to us ? To this I answer, that it is probable from St. *Luke's* preface, that there were many short and imperfect accounts handed about very early ; the authors of which, though they had not taken care to inform themselves accurately, did not, however, endeavour to impose on others designedly ; and that all these grew into disuse, of course, after the four gospels, or perhaps the three first, were published, or, at least, after the canon of the New Testament was formed ; also, that after this the christians were so perfectly satisfied, and had the four gospels in such esteem, that no one presumed to add any other accounts, and especially as all the apostles were then dead.

The second question is, how come we to have so little account, in the primitive writers, of the lives, labours, and sufferings of the apostles ? I answer that the apostles seem to have resided in *Judæa*, till *Nero's* army invaded it, and afterwards to have travelled into distant parts ; and that neither their converts in *Judæa*, nor those in the distant barbarous countries, into which they travelled, could have any probable motive for writing their lives : also, that, as to other christians, they had neither opportunities nor

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motives. The christians looked up to Christ, as their master, not to the apostles. Their great business was to promote christianity, not to gratify their own or other's fruitless curiosity. They were not learned men, who had spent their lives in the study of annals and biographers. They did not suspect, that an account of the lives of the apostles would ever be wanted, or that any one could call their integrity, inspiration, miracles, &c. in question. St. *Luke* seems to have designed by his *Acts*, chiefly to shew how the gospel first got firm footing amongst *jews*, proselytes of the gate, and idolatrous gentiles; in order to encourage the new converts to copy the examples of the apostles, and first preachers, and to publish the gospel in all nations. Lastly, the primitive christians had early disputes with *jews*, heathens, heretics, and even with one another; which took up much of their attention and concern.

Thirdly, It may be asked, who were the persons that forged the spurious acts and revelations of several of the apostles, &c.? I answer, that, amongst the number of those who joined themselves to the christians, there must be many whose hearts were not truly purified, and who, upon apostatizing, would become more self-interested, vain-glorious, and impure than before. These were antichrists, as St. *John* calls them, who left the church because they were not of it. Some of these forged books to support themselves, and establish their own tenets. Others might

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write partly like enthusiasts, partly like impostors. And, lastly, There were some both weak and wicked men, though not so abandoned as the ancient heretics, who in the latter end of the second century, and afterwards, endeavoured to make converts by forgeries, and such other wicked arts. However, all those who are usually called fathers, in the first ages, stand remarkably clear of such charges.

Fourthly, The propagation of christianity, with the manner in which it was opposed by both *jews* and gentiles, bears witness to the truth and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But I forbear entering upon this argument, as it will come more properly in another place. Let me only observe here, that there are many passages in the Talmudical writings, which afford both light and confirmation to the New Testament, notwithstanding that one principal design of the authors was to discredit it.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD
AND NEW TESTAMENTS WITH THEMSELVES
AND WITH EACH OTHER, IS AN ARGUMENT
BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THE truth of this proposition will be evident, if a sufficient number of these mutual agreements can be made out. It is never found, that any single person, who deviates much from the truth, can be so perfectly upon his guard as to be always consistent with himself. Much less therefore can this happen in the
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case of a number, living also in different ages. No-
thing can make them consistent, but their copying
faithfully after real facts. The instances will make
this clearer.

The laws of the *Israelites* are contained in the
Pentateuch, and referred to in a great variety of ways,
direct and indirect, in the historical books, in the
Psalms, and in the Prophecies. The historical facts
also in the preceding books are often referred to in
those that succeed, and in the Psalms and Prophecies.
In like manner the gospels have the greatest harmony
with each other, and the Epistles of *St. Paul* with
the *Acts of the Apostles*. And indeed one may say, that
there is scarce any book of either Old or New Testa-
ment, which may not be shewn to refer to many of the
rest in some way or other. For it is to be observed, that
the Bible has been studied and commented upon far
more than any other book whatsoever; and that it has
been the business of unbelievers in all ages to find out
the mutual relations of its parts, and of unbelievers
to search for inconsistencies; also that the first meet
every day with more and more evidences in favour of
the scriptures from the mutual agreements and coin-
cidences here considered; and that unbelievers have
never been able to allege any inconsistencies that could
in the least invalidate the truth of the principal facts;
I think, not even affect the divine inspiration of the
historical books, according to the second or third
hypothesis abovementioned.

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It will probably illustrate this proposition, to bring a parallel instance from the *Roman* writers. Suppose then that no more remained of these writers than *Livy*, *Tully*, and *Horace*. Would they not by their references to the same facts and customs, by the sameness of style in the same writer, and differences in the different ones, and numberless other such like circumstances of critical consideration, prove themselves, and one another to be genuine, and the principal facts related, or alluded to, to be true?

It is also to be observed, that this mutual harmony and self-consistency, in its ultimate ratio, is the whole of the evidence which we have for facts done in ancient times or distant places. Thus, if a person was so sceptical as to call in question the whole *Roman* history, even the most notorious facts, as their conquests first of *Italy*, and then of the neighbouring countries, the death of *Cæsar*, and the fall of the western empire by the invasions of the *Goths* and *Vandals*, with all the evidences of these from books, inscriptions, coins, customs, &c. as being all forged in order to deceive; one could only shew him, that it is inconsistent with what he sees of human nature, to suppose that there should be such a combination to deceive; or that the agreement of these evidences with each other is far too great to be the effect of any such fraudulent design, of chance, &c. And all these arguments are, in effect, only bringing a number of concurring evidences, whose sum total soon approaches to the ultimate limit,

limit, *i. e.* to unity, or absolute certainty, nearer than by any distinguishable difference. It does not therefore import, in respect of real conviction, after a certain number are brought, whether we bring any more or no; they can only add this imperceptible defect, *i. e.* practically nothing. Thus I suppose, that the remaining writings of *Livy*, *Tully*, and *Horace* alone would satisfy any impartial man so much of the general extensiveness of the *Roman* conquests, &c. that nothing perceptible could be added to his conviction; no more than any common event can, or ever does in fact, appear more credible from the testimony of a thousand than of ten or twenty witnesses of approved integrity. And whoever will apply this reasoning to the present case, must perceive, as it appears to me, that the numberless minute, direct, and indirect agreements and coincidences, that present themselves to all diligent readers of the scriptures, prove their truth and genuineness beyond all contradiction, at least according to the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration.

As to those few and small apparent inconsistencies, which are supposed to confine the inspiration of the scriptures to this lowest sense; one may observe, that they decrease every day as learned men inquire farther; and that, were the scriptures perfectly exact in every particular, there must be some apparent difficulties, arising merely from our ignorance of ancient languages, customs, distant places, &c. and consequently

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quently, that if these be not more, than our ignorance makes it reasonable to expect, they are no objection at all. And of apparent inconsistencies one may remark in particular, that they exclude the supposition of forgery. No single forger or combination of forgers, would have suffered the apparent inconsistencies which occur in a few places, such as the different genealogies of Christ in *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, and some little variations in the narration of the same fact in different gospels. These are too obvious at first sight not to have been prevented, had there been any fraud.

I will here add an hypothesis, by which, as it appears to me, one may reconcile the genealogies of *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*. I suppose then, that *St. Matthew* relates the real progenitors of *Joseph*; *St. Luke* the series of those who were heirs to *David* by birthright; and that both transcribed from genealogical tables, well known to the jews of those times. *St. Matthew* after *David* takes *Solomon*, from whom *Joseph* lineally descended. *St. Luke* takes *Nathan*, upon whom, though younger than some others, and even than *Solomon*, we must suppose the birthright to be conferred, as in the instances of *Jacob* and *Joseph*. *St. Matthew* proceeds by real descent to *Salathiel*, at the time of the captivity; *St. Luke* proceeds by the heirs according to birthright, and comes to *Salathiel* likewise. We must therefore suppose, that *Salathiel*, *Solomon*'s heir, was now *David*'s also, by the extinction of all the branches of *Nathan*'s family. *St.*

Matthew then takes *Zorobabel* as *Joseph*'s real progenitor. *St. Luke* takes him as heir or eldest son to *Salathiel*. Again, *St. Matthew* takes *Abiud* the real progenitor, *St. Luke* *Rhesa* the eldest son; and thus *St. Matthew* proceeds by lineal descent to *Joseph*, *St. Luke* by heirs to the same *Joseph*; for we are to suppose, that *Heli* dying without heirs male, *Joseph* became his heir by birthright, *i. e.* heir to *Zorobabel*, *i. e.* to *David*. If we farther suppose, that the virgin *Mary* was daughter to *Heli*, for which there appears to be some evidence, the solution will be more complete, and more agreeable to the *jewish* customs. It confirms this solution, that *St. Matthew* uses the word *γεννησε*, which restrains his genealogy to lineal descent; whereas *St. Luke* uses the article *τε*, which is very general. It confirms it also, that *St. Luke*'s descents, reckoning from *David* to *Salathiel*, are but about twenty-two years apiece; which is so much too short for descents from father to son, but agrees very well to descents by birthright. As to *St. Matthew*'s descents, they are far too long, after the captivity, for descents from father to son; but then it is easy to suppose, that some were left out on account of dying before their fathers, or some other reason. Three of the kings of *Judah* are left out after *Joram*, perhaps on account of their being of the immediate posterity of the idolatrous *Ahab*'s daughter *Athaliah*. Others are left out after the captivity, perhaps for some similar reason.

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THE UNITY OF DESIGN, WHICH APPEARS IN THE DISPENSATIONS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY OF THEIR TRUTH AND GENUINENESS, BUT ALSO OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

For this unity is not only so great as to exclude forgery and fiction, in the same way as the mutual agreements mentioned in the last proposition, but also greater than the best and ablest men could have preserved, in the circumstances of these writers, without the divine assistance. In order to see this, let us inquire what this design is, and how it is pursued by the series of events, and divine interpositions, recorded in the scriptures.

The design is that of bringing all mankind to an exalted, pure, and spiritual happiness, by teaching, enforcing, and begetting in them love and obedience to God. This appears from many passages in the Old Testament, and from almost every part of the New. Now we are not here to inquire in what manner an almighty being could soonest and most effectually accomplish this. But the question is, whether, laying down the state of things as it has been, is, and probably will be, for our foundation, there be not a remarkable fitness in the dispensations ascribed to God in the scriptures, to produce this glorious effect; and whether the persons who administered these dispensations did not here concur with a

surprizing uniformity, though none of them saw God's ultimate design completely, and some but very imperfectly; just as brutes by their instincts, and children by the workings of their natural faculties, contribute to their own preservation, improvement, and happiness without at all foreseeing, that they do this. If we alter any of the circumstances of the microcosm or macrocosm, of the frame of our own natures, or of the external world that surrounds us, we shall have question rise up after question in an endless series, and shall never be satisfied, unless God should be pleased to produce happiness instantaneously, *i. e.* without any means, or secondary instrumental causes. at all; and, even then, we should only be where we were at our first setting out, if things be considered in the true, ultimate light. We are therefore to lay down the real state of things, as our foundation, *i. e.* we are to suppose man to be in a state of good mixed with evil, born with appetites, and exposed to temptations, to which if he yields, suffering must follow; which suffering, however, tends to eradicate the disposition from whence it flowed, and to implant a better: we are to suppose him to be endued with voluntary powers, which enable him to model his affections and actions according to a rule; and that the love of God, his ultimate happiness, can never be genuine, but by his first learning to fear God, by his being mortified to pleasure, honour, and profit, and the most refined selfish desires, and by his loving his neighbour

neighbour as himself, *i. e.* we must suppose all that which practical writers mean by a state of trial, temptation, moral exercise and improvement, and of practical free-will. Let us see therefore, how the several dispensations mentioned in the scriptures, their being recorded there, and the subordinate parts, which the prophets and apostles acted, conspired to bring about this ultimate end of man, both in each individual, and in the whole aggregate, considered as one great individual, as making up the mystical body of Christ, according to the language of *St. Paul*; and inquire, whether, if all other reasons were set aside, the mere harmony and concurrence of so many parts, and so many persons removed from each other by long intervals of time, in this one great design, will not compel us to acknowledge the genuineness, truth, and divine authority, of the scriptures.

The first thing which presents itself to us in the scriptures, is the history of the creation and fall. These are not to be accounted for, as was said above, being the foundation upon which we go. However, the recording them by *Moses*, as tradition began to grow weak and uncertain, has been of great use to all those, who have had them communicated by this means perfectly or imperfectly, *i. e.* to a great part of the world. This history impresses an awful and amiable sense of the Divine Being, our creator and judge; shews the heinousness of sin; and mortifies us to this world, by declaring that our passage through

it must be attended with labour and sorrow. We find ourselves in this state; revealed religion did not bring us into it: nor is this state an objection to revealed religion, more than to natural: however, revealed religion goes a step higher than natural, and shews the immediate secondary cause, viz. the sin and wilful disobedience of our first parents. And when the account of paradise, of man's expulsion thence, and of the curse past upon him in the beginning of *Genesis*, are compared with the removal of this curse, of sorrow, crying, pain, and death, with the renovation of all things, and with man's restoration to the tree of life and paradise, and his admission into the new *Jerusalem* in the last chapter of the revelation, hope and fear quicken each other; and both conspire to purify the mind, and to advance the great design considered under this proposition.

How far the deluge was necessary, *cæteris manentibus*, for the purification of those who were destroyed by it, *i. e.* for accomplishing this great end in them, we cannot presume to say. It is sufficient, that there is no contrary presumption, that no methods consistent with the state of things in the ancient world were neglected, as far as we know, and that we are not in the least able to propose a better scheme. We leave these rebellious, unhappy people, now translated into another state, to the same kind Providence which attended them in this, and all whose punishments on this

this side the grave are for melioration. However, the evident footsteps of this in the world, and the clear tradition of it, which would continue for several ages, also the history of it delivered by *Moses*, have an unquestionable good tendency. Sinners, who reflect at all, cannot but be alarmed at so dreadful an instance of divine severity. Farther, if this history should open to us a new relation, viz. that which we bear to the comets, this, compared with other parts of the scriptures, may give us hereafter such intimations concerning the kind, degree, and duration of future punishment, as will make the most obdurate tremble, and work in them that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and of the perfect love which casteth out fear. At the same time we may observe, that the covenant which God made, not only with *Noah* and his posterity, but with all living creatures, after the flood, has a direct and immediate tendency to beget love.

The confusion of languages, the consequent dispersion of mankind, and the shortening of the lives of the postdiluvians, all concurred to check the exorbitant growth and infection of wickedness. And we may judge how necessary these checks were, *cæteris manentibus*, from the great idolatry and corruption which appeared in the world within less than a thousand years after the flood. The patriarchal revelations mentioned and intimated by *Moses* had the same good effects, and were the foundation of those pagan religions,

religions, and, in great measure, of that moral sense, which, corrupt and imperfect as they were, could not but be far preferable to an entire want of these. If it be objected, that, according to this, greater checks, and more divine communications, were wanted; I answer, that a greater dispersion, or shortening of human life, might have prevented the destined increase of mankind, or the growth of knowledge, civil and religious, &c. and that more or more evident divine interpositions might have restrained the voluntary powers too much, or have precluded that faith which is necessary to our ultimate perfection. These are conjectures indeed; but they are upon the level with the objection, which is conjectural also.

The next remarkable particular that occurs, is the calling of *Abraham*, the father of the faithful. Now in this part of the scripture history, as it is explained by the New Testament, we have the strongest evidences of God's great design to purify and perfect mankind. He is called to forsake his relations, friends and country, lest he should be corrupted by idolatry; he receives the promise of the land of *Canaan*, without seeing any probable means of obtaining it, besides this promise, in order to wean him from the dependence on external means; he waits for a son till all natural expectations ceased, for the same purpose; by obtaining him he learns to trust in God notwithstanding apparent impossibilities; and the command to sacrifice *his son, his only son Isaac, whom*
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be loved, affords him a noble opportunity of exercising this trust, and of shewing, that his principle of obedience to God was already superior to the purest of earthly perfections. Lastly, when God promises him, as a reward for all his faith and obedience, as the highest blessing, that *in him and his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*, we must conceive this to be a declaration, first, that God himself is infinitely benevolent; and, secondly, that the happiness of *Abraham*, of his seed, and of all mankind who were to be blessed in his seed, must arise from their imitation of God in his benevolence. This whole universe is therefore a system of benevolence, or, as *St. Paul* expresses it, a body, which, being *fitly framed and compacted together, increaseth itself in love*.

As to the objection which is sometimes made to the sacrifice of *Isaac*, we may observe, that *Abraham* had himself received so many divine communications, and had been acquainted with so many made to his ancestors, that he had no doubt about the commands coming from God, did not even ask himself the question. It is probable, that in that early age there had as yet been few or no false pretences, or illusions. *Abraham* could as little doubt of God's right to *Isaac's* life, or of his care of him in another state. These things were parts of the patriarchal religion. And yet great faith was required in *Abraham*, before he could overcome his natural affection and tenderness for *Isaac* out of a principle
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of obedience to God, and trust God for the accomplishment of his promise, though he commanded him to destroy the only apparent means of accomplishing it. Unless *Abraham* had been highly advanced in faith and obedience, he could not have stood so severe a trial; but this trial would greatly confirm these. And thus this history is so far from being liable to objection, that it is peculiarly conformable to those methods, which mere reason and experience dictate as the proper ones, for advancing and perfecting true religion in the soul. When the typical nature of it is also considered, one cannot surely doubt of its divine authority. And, in the previous steps through which *Abraham* passed in order to obtain this blessing, we have an adumbration and example of the faith, patience, and gradual progress in the spiritual life, which are necessary to all those who hope to be *blessed with faithful Abraham*.

Let us next pass on to *Moses* and the *Israelites* under his conduct. Here we enter upon the consideration of that people, who are the type of mankind in general, and of each individual in particular; who were the keepers of the oracles of God, and who, under God, agreeably to his promise to *Abraham*, have been, and will hereafter be a blessing to all nations, and the means of restoring man to his paradisaical state. And first they are oppressed with a cruel slavery in *Egypt*, left, being delighted with its fertility, and the present pleasures of sense which it afforded, they should for-

get their true earthly country, *the land of promise*. They then see the most amazing judgments inflicted upon their enemies the *Egyptians* by God, whilst they themselves were protected and delivered, that so they might learn confidence in his power and favour, and be thus prepared for their institution in religion, and their trial and purification in the wilderness. And here the awful delivery of the law, their being fed from day to day by miracle, their being kept from all commerce with other nations, and from all cares of this world in building, planting, &c. till their old habits, and *Egyptian* customs and idolatries, were quite effaced, and the practice of the new law established, their having the history of the world, and particularly of their ancestors, laid before them in one view, their tabernacle, their numerous rites and ceremonies, additional to those of the patriarchal religion, and opposite to the growing idolatries of their neighbours the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*, and which, besides their uses as types, were memorials of their relation to God, and of his constant presence and protection, and, lastly, the total extinction of that murmuring generation, who longed for the flesh-pots of *Egypt*, cannot but appear to be intended for the purification of this chosen people, as being remarkably analogous to the methods of purification, which every good man experiences in himself, and sees in others, *i. e.* cannot but appear highly conducive to the great design considered under this proposition.

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At last, the education and instruction of this people being finished, they are admitted to inherit the earthly promise made to their forefathers, and take possession of the land of *Canaan* under *Joshua*. And thus we come to a remarkable period in God's dispensations to them.

Now therefore they are, in some measure, left to themselves, for the sake of moral improvement, the divine interpositions being far less frequent and solemn, than at the first erection of the theocracy under *Moses's* administration. However, there were many supernatural interpositions, appointments, favours, corrections, &c. from *Joshua* to *Malachi*, on account of their yet infant state in respect of internal purity, whose tendency to improve both the body politic of the nation, and each individual, is sufficiently evident. After *Malachi* they were entirely left to themselves, their canon being completed, they were then only to hear and digest what *Moses* and the prophets had delivered unto them; and by this means to prepare themselves for the last and completest dispensation.

But, before we enter upon this, let us briefly consider the state of the gentile world, in the interval between *Abraham* and Christ, and what intimations the Old Testament gives us of their being also under the care of Providence, and in a state of moral discipline. They had then, according to this, First, the traditions of patriarchal revelations. Secondly, All the nations in the neighbourhood of *Canaan* had frequent

quent opportunities and motives to inform themselves of the true religion. Thirdly, All those who conquered them at any time could not but learn something both from their subjection, and their deliverance afterwards. Fourthly, The captivities by *Salmaneser* and *Nebuchadnezzar* carried the knowlege of the true God to many distant nations. Lastly, The distraction of the *jewish* state during the cotemporary empires of *Syria* and *Egypt*, the rise of the *Samaritan* religion, and the translation of the Old Testament into *Greek*, conduced eminently to the same purpose. And as it is necessary in the present state of things, for the exercise of various affections, and our moral improvement, that there should be degrees and subordinations in common things, so it seems equally necessary, that it should be so in religious matters: and thus the Gentiles may have had, in the interval between *Abraham* and *Christ*, all that suited their other circumstances, all that they could have improved by internal voluntary purity, other things remaining the same, which is always supposed. And it is remarkable in the view of this proposition, that we learn so much from the scriptures concerning the moral discipline which God afforded to the *Gentiles*.

When we come to the New Testament, the great design of all God's dispensations appears in a still more conspicuous manner. Here we see how *Christ* began to erect his spiritual kingdom, and the apostles extended it; we have the sublimest doctrines, and

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purest precepts, for effecting it in ourselves and others and the strongest assurances, that it will be effected at last, that this leaven will continue to operate till the whole lump be leavened. But, above all, it is remarkable, that the principal means for effecting this is by submission and sufferance, not resistance, and external violence. The preachers are to undergo shame, persecution, and death, as the Lord of life and glory did before them. This is that *foolishness of God* which is *wiser than men*, and that *weakness of God* which is *stronger than men*. These means seem foolish and weak to the false wisdom of this world. But if they be compared with the frame of our natures, and with the real constitution of things, they will appear to be perfectly suited to produce in all mankind that best of ends, the annihilation of self, and worldly desires, and the pure and perfect love of God, and of all his creatures, in and through him.

Setting aside therefore the greatness of this end, and its suitableness to the divine goodness, setting aside also the miracles which have concurred in it, I say that the coincidence of the histories, precepts, promises, threatenings, and prophecies of the scriptures in this one point is an argument not only of their genuineness and truth, but of their divine authority. Had the writers been guided by their own spirits, and not by the supernatural influences of the spirit of truth, they could neither have opened to us the various dispensations of God tending to this one point, nor

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have pursued it themselves, with such entire steadiness and uniformity, through so many different ages of the world.

The gradual opening of this design is an argument to the same purpose. Man's wisdom, if it could have formed such a design, would have rushed forward upon it prematurely. At the same time we may observe, that this design is implied in the scriptures from the first, though not expressed so as to be then understood: which is another argument of their divine original.

COR. From the reasoning used under this proposition we may be led to believe, that all the great events which happen in the world, have the same use as the dispensations, recorded in the scriptures, viz. that of being a course of moral discipline for nations and individuals, and of preparing the world for future dispensations. Thus the irruption of the barbarous nations into the *Roman* empire, the *Mahometan* imposture, the corruptions of the christian religion, the ignorance and darkness which reigned for some centuries during the grossest of these corruptions, the reformation, restoration of letters, and the invention of printing, three great cotemporary events which succeeded the dark times, the rise of the enthusiastical sects since the reformation, the vast increase and diffusion of learning in the present times, the growing extensiveness of commerce between various nations, the great prevalence of infidelity amongst both jews

and *christians*, the dispersion of *jews* and *jesuits* into all known parts of the world, &c. &c. are all events which, however mischievous some of them may seem to human wisdom, are *cæteris manentibus*, the most proper and effectual way of hastening the kingdom of Christ, and the renovation of all things.

DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS, MIRACLES, AND PROPHECIES, ARE AGREEABLE TO NATURAL RELIGION, AND EVEN SEEM NECESSARY IN THE INFANCY OF THE WORLD.

SINCE God is a being of infinite justice, mercy, and bounty, according to natural religion, it is reasonable to expect, that if the deficiencies of natural reason, or the inattention of mankind to the footsteps of his providence, were such at any time, as that all the world were in danger of being lost in ignorance, irreligion, and idolatry, God should interpose by extraordinary instruction, by alarming instances of judgment and mercy, and by prophetic declarations of things to come, in order to teach men his power, his justice, and his goodness, by sensible proofs and manifestations. We must not say here, that God could not suffer this; but inquire from history, whether he has or no. Now I suppose it will easily be acknowledged, that this was the case with the gentile world in ancient times, and that the *judaical* and *christian* institutions have greatly checked irreligion and idolatry, and advanced true natural religion;

tion; which is a remarkable coincidence in favour of these institutions, though all other evidences for them were set aside. Neither must we say here, that since God permits gross ignorance in some nations, the *Hottentots* for instance, even to this day, he might have permitted it in all mankind. Allow that we know so little of his unsearchable judgments, as not to be able to make any certain conclusion: yet surely it is much more agreeable to the forenamed attributes, and to the analogies of other things, that the bulk of mankind should have such a knowledge of God, as suits their intellectual faculties, and other circumstances, and carries them forwards in moral improvement, than that all should stand still, or go backwards, or make less improvement in religion, than tallies with their improvements in other things; also that there should be a subordination in religious advantages, rather than a perfect equality.

Natural religion also teaches us to consider God as our governor, judge, and father. Now all these superiors have two ways of administration, instruction and providence for the well-being of their inferiours, ordinary and extraordinary. It is therefore natural to expect upon great occasions an extraordinary interposition by revelation, miracle, and prophecy; and that especially in that infancy of the world after the deluge, which both sacred and profane history assure us of; inasmuch as both states and

individuals require much more of the extraordinary interposition of governors and parents in their infancy, than afterwards : all which has a remarkable correspondence with the history of revelation, as it is in fact. And the analogical presumptions for miracles, in this and the last paragraph, seem at least equal to any presumption we have, or can have, in this our state of ignorance of the whole of things, against them.

But there is another argument in favour of miraculous interpositions, which may be drawn from the foregoing theory of human nature. I take it for granted, that mankind have not been upon this earth from all eternity. Eternity neither suits an imperfect finite race of beings, nor our habitation the earth. It cannot have revolved round the sun, as it does now, from all eternity ; it must have had such changes made in it from its own fabric and principles, from the shocks of comets, &c. in infinite time, as would be inconsistent with our survival. There was therefore a time when man was first placed upon the earth. In what state was he then placed ? An infant, with his mind a blank, void of ideas, as children now are born ? He would perish instantly, without a series of miracles to preserve, educate, and instruct him. Or if he be supposed an adult with a blank mind, *i. e.* without ideas, associations, and the voluntary powers of walking, handling, speaking, &c. the conclusion is the same ; he must perish

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also, unless conducted by a miraculous interposition and guardianship. He must therefore have so much of knowlege, and of voluntary and secondarily automatic powers, amongst which speech must be reckoned as a principle one, impressed upon him in the way of instinct, as would be necessary for his own preservation, and that of his offspring; and this instinct is, to all intents and purposes, divine revelation, since he did not acquire it by natural means. It is also of the nature of prophecy; for it seems impossible for mankind to subsist upon the earth, as it now is, without some foreknowlege, and the consequent methods of providing for futurity, such, for instance, as brutes have, or even greater, since man, unprovided with manual arts, is peculiarly exposed to dangers, necessities, and hardships.

Let us next consider, how the first men are to be provided with the knowlege of God, and a moral sense: for it seems necessary, that they should be possessed of some degree of these; else the sensual and selfish desires would be so exorbitant, as to be inconsistent both with each man's own safety, and with that of his neighbour; as may be gathered from the accounts of savage nations, who yet are not entirely destitute of the knowlege of God, and the moral sense. Now, to deduce the existence and attributes of God, even in a very imperfect manner, from natural phaenomena, requires, as it seems to me, far more knowlege and ratiocination, than men could have

Have for many generations, from their natural powers; and that especially if we suppose language not to be inspired, but attained in a natural way. And it appears both from the foregoing account of the moral sense, and from common observation, that this requires much time, care, and cultivation, besides the previous knowledge of God, before it can be a match for the impetuosity of natural desires. We may conclude therefore, that the first men could not attain to that degree of the knowledge of God, and a moral sense, which was necessary for them, without divine inspiration.

There are several particulars in the *Mosaic* account of the creation, fall, and circumstances of the ancient world, which tally remarkably with the method of reasoning used here. Thus, man is at first placed in a paradise, where there was nothing noxious, and consequently where he would need less miraculous interposition in order to preserve him. He lives upon the fruits of the earth, which want no previous arts of preparing them, and which would strike him by their smells, and, after an instance or two, incite him to pluck and taste: whereas animal diet, besides its inconsistency with a state of pure innocence and happiness, requires art and preparation necessarily. There is only one man, and one woman, created, that so the occasions for exerting the social affections may not offer themselves in any great degree, before these affections are generated; but, on the

the contrary, the affections may grow naturally, as it were, out of the occasions. The nakedness, and want of shame, in our first parents, are concurring evidences of the absence of art, acquired affections, evil, &c. *i. e.* of a paradisaical state. In this state they learnt to give names to the animal world, perhaps from the automatic and semivoluntary exertions of the organs of speech, which the sight of the creatures, or the sound of their several cries, would excite; having probably a sufficient stock of language for communication with God and for conversing with each other about their daily food, and other necessary things, given them by immediate instinct or inspiration. And thus they would be initiated, by naming the animals, into the practice of inventing, learning, and applying words. For the same reasons, we may suppose, that they learnt many other things, and particularly the habit of learning, during their abode in paradise. Nay, it may perhaps be, that the growth of acquired knowledge, with the pleasantness of it, might put them upon learning evil as well as good, and excite the forbidden curiosity. After the fall, we find God providing them with clothes, *Cain* banished from the presence of God, an argument that others were permitted to have recourse to his presence to ask counsel, &c. his posterity inventing arts for themselves, *Enoch* and *Noah* walking with God before the flood, and *Abraham* afterwards; all the antediluvian patriarchs long-lived,

long-lived, the postdiluvian long-lived also for some generations; amongst other reasons, that they might instruct posterity in religious and other important truths; and the divine interpositions continuing through the whole antediluvian world, and gradually withdrawn in the postdiluvian. And it seems to me, to say the least, a very difficult thing for any man, even at this day, to invent a more probable account of the first peopling of this earth, than that which *Moses* has given us.

THE OBJECTION MADE AGAINST THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, FROM THEIR BEING CONTRARY TO THE COURSE OF NATURE, IS OF LITTLE OR NO FORCE.

It is alleged here by the objectors, that the course of nature is fixed and immutable; and that this is evinced by the concurrent testimony of all mankind in all ages; and consequently that the testimony of a few persons, who affirm the contrary, cannot be admitted; but is, *ipso facto*, invalidated by its opposing general, or even universal experience. Now to this I answer,

First, That we do not, by admitting the testimony of mankind concerning the descent of heavy bodies upon the surface of our earth, the common effects of heat and cold, &c. suppose that this invalidates the testimony of those who declare they have met with contrary appearances in certain cases.

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Each party testifies what they have seen ; and why may not the evidence of both be true ? It does not follow, because a thing has happened a thousand, or ten thousand times, that it never has failed, nor ever can fail. Nothing is more common or constant, than the effect of gravity in making all bodies upon the surface of our earth tend to its centre. Yet the rare extraordinary influences of magnetism and electricity can suspend this tendency. Now, before magnetism and electricity were discovered, and verified by a variety of concurrent facts, there would have been as much reason to disallow the evidence of their particular effects attested by eye-witnesses, as there is now to disallow the particular miracles recorded in the scriptures ; and yet we see that such a disallowance would have been a hasty conclusion, would have been quite contrary to the true nature of things. And, in fact, whatever may be the case of a few persons, and particularly of those, who think that they have an interest in disproving revealed religion, the generality of mankind, learned and unlearned, philosophical and vulgar, in all ages, have had no such disposition to reject a thing well attested by witnesses of credit, because it was contrary to the general, or even universal, tenor of former observations. Now it is evident to considering persons, especially if they reflect upon the foregoing history of association, that the dispositions to assent and dissent are generated in the human mind from the sum total
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of the influences, which particu'ar observations have had upon it. It follows therefore, since the bulk of mankind, of all ranks and orders, have been disposed to receive facts the most surprizing, and contrary to the general tenor, upon their being attested in a certain limited degree, that extraordinary facts are not, in a certain way of considering the thing, out of the tenor of nature, but agreeable to it; that here therefore, as well as in common facts, the stress is to be laid upon the credibility of the witnesses; and that to do otherwise is an argument either of some great singularity of mind, or of an undue bias.

Secondly, If it should be alleged by the objectors, that they do not mean by the course of nature, that tenor of common observations which occurred to the first rude ages of the world, or even that tenor which is usually called so at present; but those more general laws of matter and motion, to which all the various phænomena of the world, even those which are apparently most contrary to one another, may be reduced; and that it is probable, that universal experience would concur to support the true laws of nature of this kind, were mankind sufficiently industrious and accurate in bringing together the facts, and drawing the conclusions from them; in which case any deviations from the tenor of nature, thus supported and explained, would be far more improbable than according to the supposition of the foregoing paragraph; we answer, that this objection is a mere conjecture

conjecture. Since we do not yet know what these true laws of matter and motion are, we cannot presume to say whether all phænomena are reducible to them, or not. Modern philosophers have indeed made great advances in natural knowlege; however, we are still in our infant state, in respect of it, as much as former ages, if the whole of things be taken into consideration. And this objection allows and supposes it to be so. Since therefore it was the proper method for former ages, in order to make advances in real knowlege, to abide by the award of credible testimonies, however contrary these testimonies might appear to their then notions and analogies, so this is also the proper method for us.

If indeed we put the course of nature for that series of events, which follow each other in the order of cause and effect by the divine appointment, this would be an accurate and philosophical way of speaking; but then we must at once acknowledge, that we are so ignorant of what may be the divine purposes and appointments, of secret causes, and of the corresponding variety of events, that we can only appeal to the facts, to credible relations of what actually has been, in order to know what is agreeable to the course of nature thus explained. The scripture miracles may not be at all contrary to its fixedness and immutability. Nor can any objection lie against them, if we consider things in this light, from the present notions of philosophical men, *i. e.* from the

course of nature, understood in a popular sense ; since this falls so short of the true course of nature as here defined, *i. e.* as admitting the instrumentality of beings superior to us, men divinely inspired, good angels, evil spirits, and many other influences, of which our present philosophy can take no cognizance.

With respect to moral analogy, the case is somewhat different. If the moral attributes of God, and the general rules of his providence, be supposed to be established upon a sure footing, then a series of events, which should be contrary to these, would have a strong presumption against them. And yet it becomes us to be very diffident here also. God is infinite, and we finite : we may therefore, from seeing only a small portion, judge what we see to be different from what it is. However, revealed religion has no occasion in general for any such apology. Natural and revealed religion, the word and works of God, are in all principal things most wonderfully analogous ; as has been sufficiently shewn by the advocates for revealed religion, and most especially by bishop *Butler* in his *Analogy*. As far therefore as moral analogy carries weight, there is positive evidence for the scripture miracles. And our comprehension of natural analogy is so imperfect as scarce to afford any presumption against them ; but leaves the evidence in their favour, of nearly the same strength as it would have had for other facts.

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Thirdly, Let it be observed, that the evidences for the scripture miracles are so numerous, and, in other respects, so strong, as to be nearly equal to any evidences that can be brought for the most common facts. For it is very manifest, as has been observed before, that a great number of credible evidences make a sum total, that is equal to unity, or absolute certainty, as this has been considered in the foregoing part of this work, nearer than by any perceptible difference: and the greatest number can never arrive quite to unity. The evidence therefore for common facts cannot exceed that for the scripture miracles by more than an imperceptible difference, if we estimate evidences according to the truest and most accurate manner. Hence the nearly equal evidences for each must establish each in nearly an equal degree, unless we suppose either some such inconsistency between them, as that, common facts being allowed, the scripture miracles must be absolutely rejected, or that there is some evidence against the scripture miracles; which may be put in competition with that for them; neither of which things can be said with any colour of reason.

Fourthly, This whole matter may be put in another, and perhaps a more natural, as well as a more philosophical light; and that especially if the foregoing account of the mind be allowed. Association, *i. e.* analogy, perfect and imperfect, is the only foundation upon which we in fact do, or can, or ought

to assent ; and consequently a dissonance from analogy, or a repugnancy thereto, is a necessary foundation for dissent. Now it happens sometimes, that the same thing is supported and impugned by different analogies ; or, if we put repugnance to analogy as equivalent to miracle, that both a fact and its non-existence imply a miracle ; or, since this cannot be, that that side alone, which is repugnant to the most and the most perfect analogies, is miraculous, and therefore incredible. Let us weigh the scripture miracles in this scale. Now the progress of the human mind, as may be seen by all the inquiries into it, and particularly by the history of association, is a thing of a determinate nature ; a man's thoughts, words, and actions, are all generated by something previous ; there is an established course for these things, an analogy, of which every man is a judge from what he feels in himself, and sees in others : and to suppose any number of men in determinate circumstances to vary from this general tenor of human nature in like circumstances, is a miracle, and may be made a miracle of any magnitude, *i. e.* incredible to any degree, by increasing the number and magnitude of the deviations. It is therefore a miracle in the human mind, as great as any can be conceived in the human body, to suppose that infinite multitudes of christians, jews, and heathens in the primitive times, should have borne such unquestionable testimony, some expressly, others by indirect circumstances, as history informs

us they did, to the miracles said to be performed by Christ, and his apostles, upon the human body, unless they were really performed. In like manner, the reception which the miracles recorded in the Old Testament met with, is a miracle, unless those miracles were true. Thus also the very existence of the books of the Old and New Testaments, of the *jeuifh* and christian religions, &c. &c. are miracles, as is abundantly shewn by the advocates for christianity, unless we allow the scripture miracles. Here then a man must either deny all analogy and association, and become an absolute sceptic, or acknowledge that very strong analogies may sometimes be violated, *i. e.* he must have recourse to something miraculous, to something supernatural, according to his narrow views. The next question then will be, which of the two opposite miracles will agree best with all his other notions; whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, providence, the allowed history of the world, the known progress of man in this life, &c. &c. to suppose that God imparted to certain select persons, of eminent piety, the power of working miracles; or to suppose that he confounded the understandings, affections, and whole train of associations, of entire nations, so as that men, who, in all other things, seem to have been conducted in a manner like all other men, should, in respect of the history of Christ, the prophets and apostles, act in a manner repugnant to all our ideas

and experiences. Now, as this last supposition cannot be maintained at all upon the footing of deism, so it would be but just as probable as the first, even though the objector should deny the possibility of the being of a God. For the least presumption, that there may be a being of immense or infinite power, knowledge, and goodness, immediately turns the scale in favour of the first supposition.

Fifthly, It is to be considered, that the evidences for the scripture miracles are many, and most of them independent upon one another, whereas the dispensation itself is a connected thing, and the miracles remarkably related to each other. If therefore only so much as one miracle could be proved to have been really wrought in confirmation of the *jewish* or christian revelations, there would be less objection to the supposition of a second; and, if this be proved, still less to that of a third, &c. till at last the reluctance to receive them would quite vanish (which indeed appears to have been the case in the latter part of the primitive times, when the incontestable evidences for the christian miracles had been so much examined and considered, as quite to overcome this reluctance; and it seems difficult to account for the credulity in receiving false miracles, which then appeared, but upon supposition, that many true ones had been wrought). But it is not so with the evidences. The greatest part of these have so little dependence on the rest, as may be seen even from this
chapter,

chapter, that they must be set aside separately by the objector. Here it ought to be added, that the objectors have scarce ever attempted to set aside any part of the evidence, and never succeeded in such an attempt; which is of itself a strong argument in favour of the scriptures, since this is plainly the most natural and easy way of disproving a thing that is false. It ought also to be observed here, that the accomplishment of prophecy, by implying a miracle, does in like manner overbear the reluctance to receive miracles. So that if any considerable events, which have already happened in the world, can be proved to have been foretold in scripture in a manner exceeding chance, and human foresight, the objection to miracles, considered in this proposition, falls to the ground at once.

Sixthly, If any one should affirm or think, as some persons seem to do, that a miracle is impossible, let him consider, that this is denying God's omnipotence, and even maintaining, that man is the supreme agent in the universe.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE GENUINENESS, TRUTH, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT GROW LESS FROM AGE TO AGE; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT MAY RATHER BE PRESUMED, THAT THEY INCREASE.

It is sometimes alleged as an indirect objection to the christian religion, that the evidence for facts done in former times, and at remote places, decreases with the distance of time and place; and consequently that a time may come hereafter, when the evidence for the christian religion will be so inconsiderable as not to claim our assent, even allowing that it does so now. To this I answer,

First, That printing has so far secured all considerable monuments of antiquity, as that no ordinary calamities of wars, dissolutions of governments, &c. can destroy any material evidence now in being, or render it less probable, in any discernible degree, to those who shall live five hundred or a thousand years hence.

Secondly, That so many new evidences and coincidences have been discovered in favour of the *jewish* and *christian* histories, since the three great concurring events of printing, the reformation of religion in these western parts, and the restoration of letters, as, in some measure, to make up for the evidences lost in the preceding times; and, since this improvement

of the historical evidences is likely to continue, there is great reason to hope, that they will grow every day more and more irresistible to all candid, serious inquirers.

One might also allege, if it were needful, that *our* proper business is to weigh carefully the evidence which appears at present, leaving the care of future ages to Providence; that the prophetic evidences are manifestly of an increasing nature, and so may compensate for a decrease in the historical ones; and that though, in a gross way of speaking, the evidences for facts distant in time and place are weakened by this distance, yet they are not weakened in an exact proportion in any case, nor in any proportion in all cases. No one can think a fact relating to the *Turkish* empire less probable at *London* than at *Paris*, or at fifty years distance than at forty.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, EVEN PREVIOUSLY TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GENUINENESS OF THESE PROPHECIES; BUT MUCH MORE, IF THAT BE ALLOWED.

In order to evince this proposition, I will distinguish the prophecies into four kinds, and shew in what manner it holds in respect of each kind.

There are then contained in the scriptures,

First, Prophecies that relate to the state of the nations which bordered upon the land of *Canaan*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Those that relate to the political state of the *Israelites* and *jews* in all ages.

Thirdly, The types and prophecies that relate to the office, time of appearance, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the promised *Messiah*, or Christ.

Fourthly, The prophecies that relate to the state of the christian church, especially in the latter times, and to the second coming of Christ.

I begin with the prophecies of the first kind, or those which relate to the state of *Amalek*, *Edom*, *Moab*, *Ammon*, *Tyre*, *Syria*, *Egypt*, *Nineveh*, *Babylon*, and the four great successive empires of the *Babylonians*, *Persians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*. Now here I observe, First, That if we admit both the genuineness of these prophecies and the truth of the common history of the scriptures, the very remarkable coincidence of the facts with the prophecies will put their divine authority out of all doubt; as I suppose every reader will acknowledge, upon recollecting the many particular prophecies of this kind, with their accomplishments, which occur in the Old Testament. Secondly, If we allow the genuineness of these prophecies, so great a part of them may be verified by the remains of ancient pagan history, as to establish the divine authority of that part. Thus, if *Daniel's* prophecies of the image, and four beasts, were written by him in the time of the *Babylonian* empire, if the prophecies concerning the fall of *Nineveh*, *Babylon*, *Tyre*, &c. be genuine, &c.

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even profane history will shew, that more than human foresight was concerned in the delivery of them. Thirdly, That such of these prophetic events as remain to this day, or were evidently posterior to the delivery of the prophecies, prove their divine authority even antecedently to the consideration of their genuineness, as is affirmed in the former part of the proposition. Of this kind are the perpetual slavery of *Egypt*; the perpetual desolation of *Tyre* and *Babylon*; the wild, unconquered state of the *Ishmaelites*; the great power and strength of the *Roman* empire beyond those of the three foregoing empires; its division into ten kingdoms; its not being subdued by any other, as the three foregoing were; the rise of the *Mahometan* religion, and *Saracenic* empire; the limited continuance of this empire; and the rise and progress of the empire of the *Turks*. To these we may add the transactions that passed between the cotemporary kingdoms of *Syria* and *Egypt*, prophesied of in the eleventh chapter of *Daniel*. For, since these prophecies reach down to the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and the beginning subjection of these kingdoms to the *Roman* power, they cannot but have been delivered prior to the events, as may appear both from the consideration of the Septuagint translation of the book of *Daniel*, and the extinction of the Biblical *Hebrew* as a living language before that time, even though the book of *Daniel* should not be considered as a genuine book; for which suspicion there

there is, however no foundation. Lastly, we may remark, that these, and indeed all the other prophecies, have the same marks of genuineness as the rest of the scriptures, or as any other books; that they cannot be separated from the context without the utmost violence, so that, if this be allowed to be genuine, those must also; that history and chronology were in so uncertain a state in ancient times, that the prophecies concerning foreign countries could not have been adapted to the facts, even after they had happened, with so much exactness as modern inquirers have shewn the scripture prophecies to be, by a learned nation, and much less by the *jews*, who were remarkably ignorant of what passed in foreign countries; and that those prophecies, which are delivered in the manner of dream and vision, have a very strong internal evidence for their genuineness, taken from the nature of dreams, as this is explained in the foregoing part of this work.

I proceed, in the second place, to shew how the prophecies, that relate to the political state of the *jews*, prove the divine authority of the scriptures. And here, passing by many prophecies of inferior note, and of a subordinate nature, we may confine ourselves to the promise, or prophecy, of the land of *Canaan*, given to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; to the prophecies concerning the captivity of the ten tribes, and the *Babylonish* captivity of the two tribes, with their return after seventy years; and to those
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concerning the much greater captivity and desolation predicted to fall upon this chosen people in the twenty-eighth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, in various places of the prophecies, and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. There was no natural probability, at the time when these prophecies were delivered, that any of these events should happen in the manner in which they were predicted, and have accordingly happened; but, in some, the utmost improbability: so that it must appear to every candid intelligent inquirer, that nothing less than supernatural knowledge could have enabled those who delivered these predictions, to make them. The divine authority, therefore, of the books which contain these predictions, is unquestionable, provided we allow them to be genuine.

Now, besides the forementioned evidences of this, these prophecies have some peculiar ones attending them. Thus the mere departure of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, in order to go to the land of *Canaan*, their burying *Jacob* in *Canaan*, and carrying *Joseph's* bones with them, plainly imply that the promise of this land had been given to their ancestors. Thus also the prophecies relating to the captivities of *Israel* and *Judah*, and to their restorations, make so large a part of the old prophets, that, if they be not genuine, the whole books must be forged; and the genuineness of those in the New Testament cannot but be allowed by all.

I come now, in the third place, to speak of the types and prophecies that relate to Christ, the time

of his appearance, his offices, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Many of these are applied to him by himself, and by the authors of the books of the New Testament; but there are also many others, whose discovery and application are left to the sagacity and industry of christians in all ages. This seems to be a field of great extent, and the evidences arising from it of an increasing nature. It is probable that the christians of the first ages were acquainted with so many more circumstances relating to the life, death, &c. of Christ, as on this account to be able to apply a larger number of types and prophecies to him than we can. But then this may perhaps be compensated to us by the daily opening of the scriptures, and our growing knowledge in the typical and prophetical nature of them. What is already discovered of this kind, seems no ways possible to be accounted for, but from the supposition, that God, by his power and foreknowledge, so ordered the actions, history, ceremonies, &c. of the *patriarchs* and *jews*, and the language of the prophets, as to make them correspond with Christ, his offices, actions, and sufferings. If any one doubts of this, let him attempt to apply the types and prophecies to any other person. I will just mention four classes, into which these types and prophecies may be distinguished, and under each of them a few remarkable instances. There are then,

First, Prophecies which evidently relate to Christ, and either to him alone, or to others in an inferior degree:

degree only. Such are that of *Jacob* concerning *Shiloh*, of *Moses* concerning a great prophet and law-giver that should come after him, of *Isaiab* in his fifty-second and fifty-third chapters of *Daniel*, concerning the *Messiah*, many in almost all the prophets concerning a great prince, a prince of the house of *David*, &c. who should make a new covenant with his people, &c. &c.

Secondly, The typical circumstances in the lives of eminent persons, as of *Isaac*, *Joseph*, *Joshua*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Jonah*; and in the common history of the *Jewish* people, as its being called out of *Egypt*.

Thirdly, Typical ceremonies in the *Jewish* worship, as their sacrifices in general, those of the pass-over and day of expiation in particular, &c. To this head we may also refer the typical nature of the high priesthood, and of the offices of king, priest and prophet, amongst the *Jews*, &c.

Fourthly, The apparently incidental mention of many circumstances in these things, which yet agree so exactly, and in a way so much above chance, with *Christ*, as to make it evident, that they were originally intended to be applied to him. The not breaking a bone of the Paschal Lamb; the mention of renting the garment, and casting lots upon the vesture, by *David*; of offering gall and vinegar, of looking on him whom they had pierced, of the third day upon numerous occasions, &c. are circumstances of this kind.

Now, these types and prophecies afford nearly the same evidence, whether we consider the books of the Old Testament as genuine, or no. For no one calls in question their being extant as we now have them, small immaterial variations excepted, before the time of Christ's appearance. Many of them do indeed require the common history of the New Testament to be allowed as true. But there are some, those, for instance, which relate to the humiliation and death of Christ, and the spirituality of his office, the proofs of whose accomplishment are sufficiently evident to the whole world, even independently of this.

The fourth branch of the prophetical evidences are those which relate to the christian church. Here the three following particulars deserve attentive consideration.

First, The predictions concerning a new and pure religion, which was to be set up by the coming of the promised *Messiah*.

Secondly, A great and general corruption of this religion, which was to follow in after-times.

Thirdly, The recovery of the christian church from this corruption, by great tribulations; and the final establishment of true and pure religion, called *the kingdom of righteousness, of the saints, the new Jerusalem, &c.*

The predictions of the first and third kinds abound every where in the old prophets, in the discourses of Christ, and in the writings of the apostles. Those

of the second kind are chiefly remarkable in *Daniel*, the *Revelation*, and the epistles of *St. Paul*, *St. Peter*, *St. John*, and *St. Jude*. In how surprizing a manner the events of the first and second kind have answered to the predictions, cannot be unknown to any inquisitive serious person, in any christian country. At the same time it is evident, that the predictions of these things could have no foundation in probable conjectures when they were given. The events of the third class have not yet received their accomplishment; but there have been for some centuries past, and are still, perpetual advances and preparations made for them; and it now seems unreasonable to doubt of the natural probability of their accomplishment, unless we doubt at the same time of the truth of the religion itself. If it be true, it must, upon more diligent and impartial examination, both purify itself, and overcome all opposition.

And it is remarkably agreeable to the tenor of Providence in other things, that that accomplishment of prophecy, which will hereafter evidence the truth of the christian religion in the most illustrious manner, should be effected by present evidences of a less illustrious nature.

Let me add here, that many of the psalms are peculiarly applicable to the restoration and conversion of the *jews*, and to the final prevalence and establishment of the christian church, *i. e.* to the events of the third class.

THE DEGREE OF OBSCURITY WHICH IS FOUND IN THE PROPHECIES OF THE SCRIPTURES, IS NOT SO GREAT AS TO INVALIDATE THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS ITSELF AN INDIRECT TESTIMONY IN THEIR FAVOUR.

IN order to prove this proposition, I observe,

First, That there are a sufficient number of prophecies, whose interpretation is certain, clear, and precise, to shew that their agreement with the events predicted is far above the powers of chance, or human foresight. But for the proof of this point which takes in a great compass of literature, I must refer to the authors who have treated it in detail. And as those who have examined this point with accuracy and impartiality, do, as I presume, universally agree to the position here laid down, so those who have not done so, can have no pretence for asserting the contrary; this being an historical matter, which is to be determined as others of a like kind, viz. by the historical evidences. The reader may, however, form some judgment, in the gross, even from the few instances, which are alleged under the last proposition.

Secondly, That, even in the types and prophecies where interpreters differ from each other, the differences are often so inconsiderable, and the agreements so general, or else the prophecy so suited to the several events, to which it is applied by different interpreters,

interpreters, as to exclude both chance, and human foresight, *i. e.* to infer a divine communication. This point requires also a careful and candid examination, and then, I think, cannot but be determined in the affirmative; especially when the very great number of types and prophecies is taken into consideration. Fitness in numerous instances is always an evidence of design; this is a method of reasoning allowed, explicitly or implicitly, by all. And though the fitness may not be perfectly evident or precise in all, yet, if it be general, and the instances very numerous, the evidence of design, arising from it, may amount to any degree, and fall short of certainty by an imperceptible difference only. And indeed it is upon these principles alone, that we prove the divine power, knowledge, and goodness, from the harmonies, and mutual fitnesses, of visible things, and from final causes, inasmuch as these harmonies and fitnesses are precisely made out only in a few instances, if compared to those in which we see no more than general harmonies, with particular subordinate difficulties, and apparent incongruities.

That the reader may see in a stronger light, how fully the fitnesses, considered in the two foregoing paragraphs, exclude chance, and infer design, let him try to apply the types and prophecies of the four classes before-mentioned to other persons and events besides those, to which christian interpreters have applied them; and especially let him consider the types
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and prophecies relating to Christ. If design be excluded, these ought to be equally, or nearly so applicable to other persons and events; which yet, I think, no serious considerate person can affirm. Now, if chance be once excluded, and the necessity of having recourse to design admitted, we shall be instantly compelled to acknowledge a contrivance greater than human, from the long distances of time intervening between the prophecy and the event, with other such like reasons.

Thirdly, I observe that those types and prophecies, whose interpretation is so obscure, that interpreters have not been able to discover any probable application, cannot any ways invalidate the evidence arising from the rest. They are analogous to those parts of the works of nature, whose uses, and subserviency to the rest are not yet understood. And as no one calls in question the evidences of design, which appear in many parts of the human body, because the uses of others are not yet known; so the interpretations of prophecy, which are clearly or probably made out, remain the same evidence of design, notwithstanding that unsurmountable difficulties may hitherto attend many other parts of the prophetic writings.

Fourthly, It is predicted in the prophecies, that in the latter times great multitudes will be converted to the christian faith; whereas those who preach or prophesy, during the great apostasy, shall be able to do

do this only in an obscure, imperfect manner, and convert but few. Now the past and present obscurity of prophecy agrees remarkably with this prediction; and the opening, which is already made, since the revival of letters, in applying the prophecies to the events, seems to presage, that the latter times are now approaching; and that by the more full discovery of the true meaning of the prophetic writings, and of their aptness to signify the events predicted, there will be such an accession of evidence to the divine authority of the scriptures, as none but the wilfully ignorant, the profligate, and the obdurate, can withstand. It is therefore a confirmation of the prophetic writings, that, by the obscurity of one part of them, a way should be prepared for effecting that glorious conversion of all nations, which is predicted in others, in the time and manner in which it is predicted.

IT IS NO OBJECTION TO THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES TAKEN FROM THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES, THAT THEY HAVE DOUBLE, OR EVEN MANIFOLD, USES AND APPLICATIONS; BUT RATHER A CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

For the foregoing evidences all rest upon this foundation, viz. that there is an aptness in the types and prophecies to prefigure the events, greater than can be supposed to result from chance, or human foresight. When this is evidently made out from the
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great number of the types and prophecies, and the degree of clearness and preciseness of each, the shewing afterwards, that these have other uses and applications, will rather prove the divine interposition, than exclude it. All the works of God, the parts of a human body, systems of minerals, plants, and animals, elementary bodies, planets, fixed stars, &c. have various uses and subserviencies, in respect of each other: and, if the scriptures be the word of God, analogy would lead one to expect something corresponding hereto in them. When men form designs, they are indeed obliged to have one thing principally in view, and to sacrifice subordinate matters to principal ones; but we must not carry this prejudice, taken from the narrow limits of our power and knowledge, to him who is infinite in them. All his ends centre in the same point, and are carried to their utmost perfection by one and the same means. Those laws, ceremonies, and incidents, which best suited the *jewish* state, and the several individuals of it, were also most apt to prefigure the promised Messiah, and the state of the christian church, according to the perfect plan of these things, which, in our way of speaking, existed in the divine mind from all eternity; just as that magnitude, situation, &c. of our earth, which best suits its present inhabitants, is also best suited to all the changes which it must hereafter undergo, and to all the inhabitants of other planets,

planets, if there be any such, to whom its influence extends.

The following instance may perhaps make this matter more clearly understood. Suppose a person to have ten numbers, and as many lines, presented to his view; and to find by mensuration, that the ten numbers expressed the lengths of the ten lines respectively. This would make it evident, that they were intended to do so. Nor would it alter the case, and prove that the agreement between the numbers and lines arose, without design, and by chance, as we express it, to allege that these numbers had some other relations; that, for instance, they proceeded in arithmetical or geometrical progression, were the squares or cubes of other numbers, &c. On the contrary, any such remarkable property would rather increase than diminish the evidence of design in the agreement between the numbers and lines. However, the chief thing to be inquired into would plainly be, whether the agreement be too great to be accounted for by chance. If it be, design must be admitted.

THE APPLICATION OF THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BY THE WRITERS OF THE NEW DOES NOT WEAKEN THE AUTHORITY OF THESE WRITERS, BUT RATHER CONFIRM IT.

For the objections, which have been made to the writers of the New Testament on this head, have been

been grounded principally upon a supposition, that when an obvious literal sense of a passage, or a manifest use of a ceremony, suited to the then present times, are discovered, all others are excluded, so as to become misapplications. But this has been shewn in the last proposition to be a prejudice arising from the narrowness of our faculties and abilities. Whence it follows, that, if the scripture types and prophecies be remarkably suited to different things, which is a point that is abundantly proved by learned men, they cannot but, in their original design, have various senses and uses. And it is some confirmation of the divine authority of the writers of the New Testament, that they write agreeably to this original design of God.

It may perhaps afford some satisfaction to the reader to make some conjectures concerning the light in which the types and prophecies, which have double senses, would appear first to the ancient *jews*, and then to those who lived in the time of our saviour. From hence we may judge in what light it is reasonable they should be taken by us.

Let our instance be the second psalm, which we are to suppose written by *David* himself, or, at least, in the time of his reign. It is evident, that there are so many things in this psalm peculiarly applicable to *David's* ascent to the throne by God's special appointment, to the opposition which he met with both in his own nation, and from the neighbouring

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ones, and to his victories over all his opposers through the favour of God, that the *jews* of that time could not but consider this psalm as relating to *David*. Nay, one can scarce doubt, but the psalmist himself, whether he seemed to himself to compose it from his own proper fund, or to have it dictated immediately by the spirit of God, would have *David* principally in view. At the same time it is evident, that there are some passages, particularly the last, *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him*, i. e. in the son, which it would be impious, especially for an *Israelite*, to apply to *David*, and which therefore no allowance for the sublimity of the eastern poetry could make applicable. It may be supposed therefore, that many, or most, considered such passages as having an obscurity in them, into which they could no ways penetrate; whereas a few perhaps, who were peculiarly enlightened by God, and who meditated day and night upon the promises made to their ancestors, particularly upon those to *Abraham*, would presume or conjecture, that a future person of a much higher rank than *David*, was prefigured thereby. And the case would be the same in regard to many other psalms: they would appear to the persons of the then present times both to respect the then present occurrences, and also to intimate some future more glorious ones; and would mutually support this latter interpretation in each other.

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When the prophets appeared in the declension and captivities of the kingdoms of *Israel* and *Judah*, the same interpretation would be strengthened, and the expectations grounded thereon increased, by the plainer and more frequent declarations of the prophets concerning such a future person, and the happiness which would attend his coming. The great and various sufferings of this chosen people, their return and deliverance, their having their scriptures collected into one view by *Ezra*, and read in their synagogues during the interval from *Ezra* to Christ, the figurative senses put upon dreams, visions, and parables, in their scriptures, &c. would all concur to the same purpose, till at last it is reasonable to expect that the *jews* in our saviour's time would consider many of the institutions and ceremonies of their law, of the historical events, of the psalms appointed for the temple-worship, and of the inspired declarations of the prophets, as respecting the future times of the *Messiah*; and this, in some cases, to the exclusion of the more obvious senses and uses, which had already taken place; being led thereto by the same narrow-mindedness, which makes some in these days reject the typical and more remote sense, as soon as they see the literal and more immediate one. Now, that this was, in fact, the case of the *jews* in the time of Christ, and for some time afterwards, appears from the New Testament, from the christian writers of the first ages, and from the Talmudical ones.

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A great part, however, of the scripture types and prophecies appeared to the *jews* to have no relation to their promised *Messiah*, till they were interpreted by the event. They expected a person that should correspond to *David* and *Solomon*, two glorious princes; but they did not see how *Isaac*, or the paschal lamb, should typify him; or that the circumstance of being called out of *Egypt*, the appellation of *Nazarene*, or the parting garments, and casting lots upon a vesture, should contribute to ascertain him. However, it is certain, that to persons who had for some time considered their scriptures in the typical, prophetic view, mentioned in the last paragraph, every remarkable circumstance and coincidence of this kind, verified by the event, would be a new accession of evidence, provided we suppose a good foundation from miracles, or prophecies of undoubted import, to have been laid previously. Nay, such coincidences may be considered not only as arguments to the *jews* of Christ's time, but as solid arguments in themselves, and that exclusively of the context. For though each of these coincidences, singly taken, affords only a low degree of evidence, and some of them scarce any, yet it is a thing not to be accounted for from chance, that separate passages of the Old Testament should be applicable to the circumstances of Christ's life, by an allusion either of words or sense, in ten or an hundred times a greater number, than to any other persons, from mere accident. And this holds in a much

higher degree, if the separate passages or circumstances be subordinate parts of a general type. Thus the parting the garments, the offering vinegar and gall, and the not breaking a bone, have much more weight, when it is considered that *David* and the paschal lamb, are types of the *Messiah*. And when the whole evidence of this kind which the industry of pious christians has brought to light in the first ages of christianity, and again since the revival of letters, is laid together, it appears to me to be both a full proof of the truth of the christian religion, and a vindication of the method of arguing from typical and double senses.

It may be added in favour of typical reasoning, that it corresponds to the method of reasoning by analogy, which is found to be of such extensive use in philosophy. A type is indeed nothing but an analogy, and the scripture types are not only a key to the scriptures, but seem also to have contributed to put into our hands the key of nature, analogy. And this shews us a new correspondence or analogy between the word and works of God. However, since certain well-meaning persons seem to be prejudiced against typical and double senses, I will add some arguments, whereby the writers of the New Testament may be defended upon this footing also.

First, then, Since the *jews* in the times of the writers of the New Testament, and consequently these writers themselves, were much given to typical reasonings,

reasonings, and the application of passages of the Old Testament in a secondary sense to the times of the *Messiah*, this would be a common foundation for these writers, and those to whom they wrote, to proceed upon, derived from association, and the acquired nature of their minds. And it is easy to conceive, that God would permit them to proceed upon this foundation for the then present time, though it would not extend to the world in general, to distant ages, and to persons of different educations, as that they should be left to the workings of their own acquired natures in many other respects, notwithstanding the supernatural gifts bestowed upon them in some; or as it is to conceive, that God should confer any thing, existence, happiness, &c. in any particular manner or degree.

Secondly, There are some passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old in the way of mere allusion. This cannot, I think, be true of many, where the passage is said to be *fulfilled*, without doing violence to the natural sense of the words, and of the context, in the New Testament: however, where it is, it entirely removes the objection here considered.

Thirdly, If we should allow, that the writers of the New Testament were sometimes guilty of erroneous reasonings in these or other matters, still this does not affect their moral characters at all; nor their intellectual ones, which are so manifest from the general soundness and strength of their other reason-

ings, in any such manner as to be of importance in respect of the evidence for the general truth of the scriptures, or for their divine authority in the first and lowest sense above considered.

THE MORAL CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE
PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVE THE TRUTH
AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIP-
TURES.

LET us begin with the consideration of the character of Christ. This, as it may be collected from the plain narrations of the gospels, is manifestly superior to all other characters, fictitious or real, whether drawn by historians, orators, or poets. We see in it the most entire devotion and resignation to God, and the most ardent and universal love to mankind, joined with the greatest humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, prudence, and every other virtue, divine and human. To which we are to add, that, according to the New Testament, Christ, being the lord and creator of all, took upon himself the form of a servant, in order to save all; that, with this view, he submitted to the helplessness and infirmities of infancy, to the narrowness of human understanding, and the perturbations of human affections, to hunger, thirst, labour, weariness, poverty, and hardships of various kinds, to lead a sorrowful, friendless life, to be misunderstood, betrayed, insulted, and mocked, and at last to be put to a painful and igno-

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minious death ; also (which deserves our most serious consideration, however incongruous to our narrow apprehensions it may appear at first sight) to undergo the most bitter mental agony previously. Here then we may make the following observations.

First, That, laying down the present disorders of the moral world, and the necessity of the love of God and our neighbour, and of self-annihilation, in order to the pure and ultimate happiness of man, there seems to be a necessity also for a suffering saviour. At least, one may affirm, that the condescension of Christ, in leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and in shewing himself a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, both in doing and suffering, has a most peculiar tendency to rectify the present moral depravity of our natures, and to exalt us thereby to pure spiritual happiness. Now it is remarkable, that the evangelists and apostles should have thus hit upon a thing, which all the great men amongst the ancient heathens missed, and which however clear it does and ought now to appear to us, was a great stumbling-block to them, as well as to the *jews* ; the first seeking after wisdom, *i. e.* human philosophy and eloquence ; and the last requiring a sign, or a glorious temporal saviour. Nor can this be accounted for, as it seems to me, but by admitting the reality of the character, *i. e.* the divine mission of Christ, and the consequent divine inspiration of those who drew it,

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i. e. the truth and divine authority of the New Testament.

Secondly, If we allow only the truth of the common history of the New Testament, or even, without having recourse to it, only such a part of the character of Christ, as neither ancient nor modern *jews*, heathens, or unbelievers, seem to contest, it will be difficult to reconcile so great a character, claiming divine authority, either with the moral attributes of God, or indeed with itself, upon the supposition of the falsehood of that claim. One can scarce suppose, that God would permit a person apparently so innocent and excellent, so qualified to impose upon mankind, to make so impious and audacious a claim without having some evident mark of imposture set upon him; nor can it be conceived, how a person could be apparently so innocent and excellent, and yet really otherwise.

Thirdly, The manner in which the evangelists speak of Christ, shews that they drew after a real copy, *i. e.* shews the genuineness and truth of the gospel history. There are no direct encomiums upon him, no laboured defences or recommendations. His character arises from a careful impartial examination of all that he said and did, and the evangelists appear to have drawn this greatest of all characters without any direct design to do it. Nay, they have recorded some things, such as his being moved with the passions of human nature, as well as being
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affected by its infirmities, which the wisdom of this world would rather have concealed. But their view was to shew him to the persons to whom they preached as the promised *Messiah* of the *jews*, and the saviour of mankind ; and as they had been convinced of this themselves from his discourses, actions, sufferings, and resurrection, they thought nothing more was wanting to convince such others as were serious and impartial, but a simple narrative of what Jesus said and did. And if we compare the transcendent greatness of this character with the indirect manner in which it was delivered, and the illiterateness and low condition of the evangelists, it will appear impossible, that they should have forged it, that they should not have had a real original before them, so that nothing was wanting but to record simply and faithfully. How could mean and illiterate persons excel the greatest geniuses, ancient and modern, in drawing a character ? How came they to draw it in an indirect manner ? This is indeed a strong evidence of genuineness and truth ; but then it is of so reclusive and subtle a nature, and, agreeably to this, has been so little taken notice of by the defenders of the christian religion, that one cannot conceive the evangelists were at all aware, that it was an evidence. The character of Christ, as drawn by them, is therefore genuine and true ; and consequently proves his divine mission both by its transcendent excellence, and by his laying claim to such a mission.

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Here it ought to be particularly remarked, that our saviour's entire devotion to God, and sufferings for the sake of men in compliance with his will, is a pitch of perfection, which was never proposed, or thought of, before his coming (much less attempted or attained); unless as far as this is virtually included in the precepts for loving God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, and other equivalent passages in the Old Testament.

We come, in the next place, to consider the characters of the prophets, apostles, and other eminent persons mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. Here then we may observe,

First, That the characters of the persons who are said in the scriptures to have had divine communications, and a divine mission, are so much superior to the characters which occur in common life, that we can scarce account for the more eminent single ones, and therefore much less for so large a succession of them, continued through so many ages, without allowing the divine communications and assistance, which they allege. It is true indeed, that many of these eminent persons had considerable imperfections, and some of them were guilty of great sins occasionally, though not habitually. However, I speak here of the balance, after proper deductions are made, on account of these sins and imperfections; and leave it to the impartial reader to consider, whether the prophets, apostles, &c. were not so much superior,
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not only to mankind at an average, but even to the best men among the *Greeks* and *Roman*, as is not fairly to be accounted for by the mere powers of human nature.

Secondly, If this should be doubted, their characters are, however, far too good to allow the supposition of an impious fraud and imposture; which must be the case, if they had not divine authority. We have therefore this double argument for the divine authority of the scriptures, if we only allow the genuineness and truth of its common history.

Thirdly, The characters of the eminent persons mentioned in the scriptures arise so much, in an indirect way, from the plain narrations of facts, their sins and imperfections are so fully set forth by themselves, or their friends, with their condemnation and punishment, and the vices of wicked men, and the opposers of God and themselves, related in so candid a way, with all fit allowances, that we have in this a remarkable additional evidence for the truth of this part of the scripture history, besides the common ones before given, which extend to the whole.

Fourthly, The eminent persons here considered are sometimes charged by unbelievers with crimes, where, all circumstances being duly weighed, they did nothing unjustifiable, nothing more than it was their indispensable duty to God to do; as *Abraham* in preparing to sacrifice *Isaac*; *Joshua* in destroying the *Canaanites*, &c. We cannot determine an action to be
sinful

sinful from a mere, abstracted, general definition of it, as that it is the taking away the life of a man, &c. but must carefully weigh all circumstances. And indeed there are no maxims in morality that are quite universal; they can be no more than general; and it is sufficient for human purposes, that they are so much, notwithstanding that the addition of peculiar circumstances makes the action vary from the general rule. Now the certain command of God may surely be such a circumstance.

Lastly, The perfection of virtue being of an ever-growing infinite nature, it is reasonable to expect, that mankind in its infant state, soon after the flood, and so onwards for some time, should be more imperfect, and have less of the pure and sublime precepts concerning indifference to this world, and all present things, universal unlimited charity, mortification, abstinence, charity, &c. delivered to them, than we christians have, and less expected from them. And yet, upon the whole, the patriarchs and eminent persons among the *jews* were *burning and shining lights* in their respective generations. However, it is also to be observed here, that the most sublime precepts of the gospel do appear from the first in the Old Testament, though under a veil; and that they were gradually opened more and more under the latter prophets.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS is an argument which has great force, independently of other considerations. Thus let us suppose, that the author of the gospel which goes under St. *Matthew's* name, was not known; and that it was unsupported by the writers of the primitive times; yet such is the unaffected simplicity of the narrations, the purity of the doctrines, and the sincere piety and goodness of the sentiments, that it carries its own authority with it. And the same thing may be said in general of all the books of the Old and New Testaments: so that it seems evident to me, that, if there was no other book in the world besides the bible, a man could not reasonably doubt of the truth of revealed religion. *The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart.* Men's writings and discourses must receive a tincture from their real thoughts, desires, and designs. It is impossible to play the hypocrite in every word and expression. This is a matter of common daily observation, that cannot be called in question; and the more any one thinks upon it, or attends to what passes in himself or others, to the history of the human thoughts, words, and actions, and their necessary mutual connections, *i. e.* to the history of association, the more clearly will he see it. We may conclude therefore, even if all

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Other arguments were set aside, that the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, whoever they were, cannot have made a false claim to divine authority.

But there is also another method of inferring the divine authority of the scriptures from the excellence of the doctrine contained therein. For the scriptures contain doctrines concerning God, providence, a future state, the duty of man, &c. far more pure and sublime than can any ways be accounted for from the natural powers of men, so circumstanced as the sacred writers were. That the reader may see this in a clearer light, let him compare the several books of the Old and New Testaments with the cotemporary writers amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans*, who could not have less than the natural powers of the human mind; but might have, over and above, some traditional hints derived ultimately from revelation. Let him consider whether it be possible to suppose, that *jewish* shepherds, fishermen, &c. should, both before and after the rise of the heathen philosophy, so far exceed the men of the greatest abilities and accomplishments in others nations, by any other means, than divine communications. Nay, we may say, that no writers, from the invention of letters to the present times, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Testaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity; which is surely such an internal criterion of their divine authority, as ought not to be resisted. And

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perhaps it never is resisted by any, who have duly considered these books, and formed their affections and actions according to the precepts therein delivered.

An objection is sometimes made against the excellence of the doctrines of the scriptures, by charging upon them erroneous doctrines, established by the authority of creeds, councils, and particular churches. But this is a manner of proceeding highly unreasonable. The unbeliever, who pays so little regard to the opinions of others, as to reject what all churches receive, the divine mission of Christ, and the evidences for the truth of the scriptures, ought not at other times to suppose the churches, much less any particular one, better able to judge of the doctrine; but should in the latter case, as well as the first, examine for himself; or if he will take the doctrine upon trust, he ought much rather to take the evidence so.

If it can be shewn, either that the true doctrine of the scriptures differs from that which is commonly received, or that reason teaches something different from what is commonly supposed, or lastly that we are insufficient judges what are the real doctrines of scripture, or reason, or both, and consequently that we ought to wait with patience for farther light, all objections of this kind fall to the ground. One may also add, that the same arguments which prove a doctrine to be very absurd, prove also, for the most part, that it

is not the sense of the passage; and that this is a method of reasoning always allowed in interpreting profane authors.

THE MANY AND GREAT ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO THE WORLD FROM THE PATRIARCHAL, JUDAICAL, AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THESE advantages are of two sorts, relating respectively to the knowledge and practice of religion. I begin with the first.

Now it is very evident, that the christian revelation has diffused a much more pure and perfect knowledge of what is called natural religion, over a great part of the world, viz. wherever the profession either of christianity or mahometism prevails. And the same thing will appear, in respect of the *judaical* and *patriarchal* revelations, to those who are acquainted with ancient history. It will be found very difficult by such persons, to account even for the pagan religions without recurring to such patriarchal communications with God, as are mentioned in the Pentateuch, and to the more full revelations made to the *jews*. So that one is led to believe, that all that is good in any pagan or false religion, is of divine original; all that is erroneous and corrupt, the offspring of the vanity, weakness, and wickedness of men; and that properly speaking, we have no reason from his-

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tory to suppose, that there ever was any such thing as mere natural religion, *i. e.* any true religion, which men discovered to themselves by the mere light of nature. These positions seem to follow from inquiries into the antiquities of the heathen world, and of their religions. The heathen religions all appear to be of a derivative nature ; each circumstance in the inquiry confirms the scriptural accounts of things, and sends us to the revelations expressly mentioned, or indirectly implied, in the Old Testament, for the real original of the pagan religions in their simple state. This opinion receives great light and confirmation from Sir *Isaac Newton's* Chronology.

It appears also very probable to me, that a careful examination of the powers of human understanding would confirm the same position : and that admitting the novelty of the present world, there is no way of accounting for the rise and progress of religious knowledge, as it has taken place in fact, without having recourse to divine revelation. If we admit the *patriarchal, judaical, and christian* revelations, the progress of natural religion, and of all the false pretences to revelation, will fairly arise (at least, appear possible in all cases, and probable in most) from the circumstances of things, and the powers of human nature ; and the foregoing doctrine of association will cast some light upon the subject. If we deny the truth of these revelations, and suppose the scriptures to be false, we shall cast utter confusion upon the inquiry,

and human faculties will be found far unequal to the task assigned to them.

Secondly, If we consider the practice of true religion the good effects of revelation are still more evident. Every man who believes, must find himself either excited to good, or deterred from evil, in many instances, by that belief; notwithstanding that there may be many other instances, in which religious motives are too weak to restrain violent and corrupt inclinations. The same observations occur daily with regard to others, in various ways and degrees. And it is by no means conclusive against this obvious argument for the good effects of revelation upon the morals of mankind, to allege that the world is not better now, than before the coming of Christ. This is a point which cannot be determined by any kind of estimation, in our power to make; and, if it could, we do not know what circumstances would have made the world much worse than it is, had not christianity interposed. However, it does appear to me very *probable*, to say the least, that *jews* and *christians*, notwithstanding all their vices and corruptions, have, upon the whole, been always better than heathens and unbelievers. It seems to me also, that as the knowledge of true, pure, and perfect religion is advanced and diffused more and more every day, so the practice of it corresponds thereto: but then this, from the nature of the thing, is a fact of a less obvious kind; however, if it be true, it will become manifest in due time. Let us suppose

pose a person to maintain, that civil government, the arts of life, medicines, &c. have never been of use to mankind, because it does not appear from any certain calculation, that the sum total of health and happiness is greater among the polite nations, than among the barbarous ones. Would it not be thought a sufficient answer to this, to appeal to the obvious good effects of these things in innumerable instances, without entering into a calculation impossible to be made? However, it does here also appear, that as far as we are able to judge, civilized countries are, upon the whole, in a more happy state than barbarous ones, in all these respects.

Now, as the divine original of revelation may be directly concluded from its being the sole fountain of all religious knowlege, if that can be proved; so it will follow in an indirect way, if we suppose, that revelation has only promoted the knowlege and practice of true religion. It is not likely, that folly or deceit of any kind should be eminently serviceable in the advancement of wisdom and virtue. Every tree must produce its proper fruit. Enthusiasm and imposture cannot contribute to make men prudent, peaceable and moderate, disinterested and sincere.

THE WONDERFUL NATURE, AND SUPERIOR
EXCELLENCE, OF THE ATTEMPT MADE BY
CHRIST, AND HIS APOSTLES, ARE EVIDENCES
OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS attempt was that of reforming all mankind, and making them happy in a future state. And, when we consider first the attempt itself, and then the assurance of success in it, which appears in all their words and actions, by ways both direct and indirect, there arises from thence alone, a strong presumption in their favour, as well as in favour of the authors of the books of the Old Testament, who have concurred in the same attempt, though less informed of the true nature and full extent of it. For ideas and purposes of this kind could scarce enter into the hearts of weak or wicked men; much less could such persons enter upon and prosecute so great an undertaking with such prudence, integrity, and constancy, or form such right judgments both of the opposition they should meet with, and of the prevalence of their own endeavours, and those of their successors, over this opposition. Nay, one may say, that nothing less than supernatural assistance could qualify them for these purposes. No design of this kind was ever formed, or thought of, till the coming of Christ; and the pretences of enthusiasts and impostors to the same commission since, have all been copied from Christ, as being necessary to their succeeding in any measure,
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since his coming. If it be supposed to be the true interpretation and meaning of the scriptures, to publish final redemption, conversion, and salvation to all mankind, even the most wicked, in some distant future state, this will add great force to the present argument.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, IS TAUGHT AND INCULCATED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

FOR it appears, that the scriptures do virtually include, or even expressly assert, all that the modern philosophy has discovered or verified concerning these important subjects; which degree of illumination, as it can with no plausibility be accounted for in illiterate men in the time of *Augustus* from natural causes, so much less can it in the preceding times from Christ up to *Moses*. This proposition has been touched upon before; however, the subject of it is of so much importance, as to deserve a separate place.

Here then, First, We may observe, that *Moses* commands the *Israelites* to love God with all the heart, and soul, and might, whereas they are to love their neighbours only as themselves. Now, though this infinite superiority of the love due to God over that due to our neighbour be perfectly agreeable to that infinite majesty and goodness of God, and nothingness

thingness of the creatures, which every new discovery in philosophy now opens to view ; yet it was so little known, many ages after *Moses*, amongst the wisest of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, that we cannot ascribe it to his mere natural sagacity. The natural equality of all men, and the self-annihilation, implied in the precept of loving *all* our brethren as well as ourselves, are also the genuine dictates of true philosophy.

Secondly, In order to shew the divine authority of the scriptures, from the manner in which the love of God is taught in them, we must consider not only the direct precepts concerning this love, but also all those concerning hope, trust, fear, thankfulness, delight, &c. for all these concur to inculcate and beget in us the love of God. The same may be said of all the scriptural descriptions of God, and his attributes, and of the addresses of good men to him, which are there recorded. God is declared in the scriptures to be light, love, goodness, the source of all happiness and perfection, the father and protector of all, &c. And the eminent persons who composed the Psalms, and other such like addresses to God, appear to have devoted themselves entirely to him. Now, when we reflect, that there is scarce any thing of this kind in the writings of the philosophers who preceded Christ, and nothing comparable to the scripture expressions even in those who came after him ; when we farther reflect, that the writings of the ablest and best men of the

the present times contain nothing excellent of the devotional kind, but what may be found in the scriptures, and even in the Old Testament; there seems to be a necessity for having recourse to divine inspiration, as the original source of this great degree of illumination in the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

Thirdly, Good persons are, in the scriptures, styled *children of God; members of Christ; partakers of the divine nature; one with God and Christ, as Christ is with God; members of each other; heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ; heirs of all things, &c.* Expressions which have the strongest tendency to raise in us an unbounded love to God, and an equal one to our neighbour, and which include and convey the most exalted, and at the same time the most solid, conceptions of this great system of things. And if we suppose, that these high titles and privileges are, according to the scriptures, to be hereafter extended to all mankind, the divine original of the scriptures will receive a new accession of evidence on this account.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSARY SUBSERVIENCY OF PAIN TO PLEASURE, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE scriptures give frequent and strong intimations, that the ultimate happiness which they promise, is not to be obtained in this our degenerate state, but

but by a previous passage through pain. *Blessed are they that mourn. We must rejoice in tribulation. The palm-bearing multitude comes out of great tribulation. The captain of our salvation, and therefore all his soldiers, must be made perfect through sufferings. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. It is good for us to be afflicted, that we may learn to keep the commandments of God. The jews must be captivated, and undergo the severest afflictions, before they can be made happy finally, as the people of God. Man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow all his life, and return to the dust at last; and yet still the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and gain re-admission to the tree of life, whose leaves shall heal the nations, &c. &c.* Now there is a surprising correspondence between such expressions as these, and many modern discoveries, which shew that pain is, in general, introductory and subservient to pleasure; and particularly, that such is the present frame of our natures, and constitution of the external world, which affects our organs, that we cannot be delivered from the sensuality and selfishness, that seize upon us at our first entrance into life, and advanced to spirituality and disinterestedness, to the love of God and our neighbour, we cannot have our wills broken, and our faculties exalted and purified, so as to relish happiness wherever we see it, but by the perpetual correction and reformation of our judgments and desires from painful impressions and associations. And all philosophical

phical inquiries of this kind seem to cast a peculiar light and evidence upon the scripture expressions before-mentioned, and to make their accuracy, and congruity with experience and observation, be much more plainly seen and felt.

THE MUTUAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF BEINGS
TO EACH OTHER'S HAPPINESS AND MISERY,
UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN AR-
GUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

To this head is to be referred all that the scriptures deliver concerning good and evil angels; Christ, the Lord of all, becoming the redeemer of all; *Adam's* injuring all his posterity through his frailty; *Abraham's* becoming the father of the faithful, and all nations being blessed through him; the *jews* being the keepers of the oracles of God, and of the true religion; tyrants being scourges in the hand of God; the fulness of the gentiles being the occasion of the final restoration the *jews*; and, in general, the doctrine that God prepares and disposes of every thing so, as that nothing is for itself alone, but every person and nation has various relations to others, co-operates with them through Christ, who is *the head*, and through whom *the whole body being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, increaseth and edifieth itself in love, till all things, both in heaven and earth,* arrive, in their several orders, to the *measure of the*

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Nature of the fulness of Christ. Now whoever compares these scripture expressions and doctrines with the various mutual relations, subserviencies, and uses of the parts of the external world, heavenly bodies, meteors, elements, animals, plants, and minerals, to each other, cannot help seeing a wonderful analogy between the works of God and the scriptures, so wonderful as justly to entitle the last to the appellation of the word of God.

And thus we may perceive, that the scripture account of the fall of man, his redemption by Christ, and the influences exerted upon him by good and evil angels, is so far from affording an objection against the christian religion, that it is a considerable evidence for it, when viewed in a truly philosophical light. God works in every thing by means, by those which, according to our present language and short-sightedness, are termed bad and unfit, as well as by the good and evidently fit ones; and all these means require a definite time, before they can accomplish their respective ends. This occurs to daily observation in the course and constitution of nature. And the scripture doctrines concerning the fall, the redemption by Christ, and the influences of good and evil angels, are only such intimations concerning the principal invisible means that lead man to his ultimate end, happiness, in being united to God, as accelerate him in his progress thither. According to the scriptures, *Adam* hurts all, through frailty; *Christ* saves
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all, from his love and compassion to all; evil angels tempt, through malice; and good ones assist and defend, in obedience to the will of God, and his original and ultimate design of making all happy. These things are indeed clothed in a considerable variety of expressions, suited to our present ways of acting, conceiving, and speaking (which ways are, however, all of divine original, God having taught mankind, in the patriarchal times, the language, as one may say, in which he spake to them then and afterwards); but these expressions can have no greater real import, than that of signifying to us the means made use of by God; he being, according to the scriptures, as well as reason, the one only real agent in all the transactions that relate to man, to angels, &c. And to object to the method of producing happiness by this or that means, because of the time required to accomplish the end, of the mixture of evil, &c. is to require, that all God's creatures should at once be created infinitely happy, or rather have existed so from all eternity *i. e.* should be *gods*, and not *creatures*.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES
MAY BE INFERRED FROM THE SUPERIOR
WISDOM OF THE JEWISH LAWS, CONSIDERED
IN A POLITICAL LIGHT; AND FROM THE
EXQUISITE WORKMANSHIP SHEWN IN THE
TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE.

ALL these were originals amongst the *jews*, and some of them were copied partially and imperfectly by ancient heathen nations. They seem also to imply a knowlege superior to the respective times. And I believe, that profane history gives sufficient attestation to these positions. However, it is certain from scripture, that *Moses* received the whole body of his laws, also the pattern of the tabernacle, and *David* the pattern of the temple, from God; and that *Bezaleel* was inspired by God for the workmanship of the tabernacle. Which things, being laid down as a sure foundation, may encourage learned men to inquire into the evidences from profane history, that the knowlege and skill to be found amongst the *jews* were superior to those of other nations at the same period of time, *i. e.* were supernatural.

THE WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE PUBLICATION OF REVEALED RELIGION IS NO OBJECTION TO IT; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE TIME AND MANNER, IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURES WERE WRITTEN, AND DELIVERED TO THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

HERE I observe,

First, That objections of this kind ought never to be admitted against historical evidence; and, in fact, are not, upon other subjects. It is evident, as was observed in the beginning of this tract, that to allow the truth of the scripture history, is to allow the truth of the christian religion. Now it is very foreign to the purpose of an inquiry into the truth of the scripture history, to allege that it has not been made known to all mankind, in all ages, and under all circumstances of each individual. It must require much abstracted and subtle reasoning, and such as can never be put in competition with plain historical evidence, to connect this objection with the proposition objected to. This is therefore, at least, a strong presumption against the validity of such an objection.

Secondly, This objection seems to derive its whole force from such positions relating to the moral attributes of God, as make it necessary for us to suppose, either that he deals with all his creatures at present in an equally favourable manner, or, at least, that nothing shall be ultimately wanting to their happiness.

Now the first supposition appears, upon the most transient view which we take of things, to be utterly false. There are differences of all degrees at present, in respect of all the good things which God has given us to enjoy ; and therefore may be in the best of all good things, revealed religion. And indeed, if it was otherwise in respect of revealed religion, one strong argument in its favour would be wanting, viz. its analogy with the course of nature. The moral attributes of God are to be deduced from observations made upon the course of nature. If therefore the tenor of revelation be agreeable to that of nature, it must be so to the moral attributes of God. But if any one supposes, in the second place, that notwithstanding present and apparent differences in the circumstances of God's creatures, there are no real and ultimate ones ; at least, that the balance will ultimately be in favour of each individual finitely, or perhaps infinitely ; I answer, that this supposition is as agreeable to revelation as to natural reason ; that there are as probable evidences for it in the word of God, as in his works, there being *no acceptance of persons with God, no difference between the jew and the gentile*, according to the scriptures ; and that we may infer as strongly from the scriptures, that Christ will save all, as it can be inferred from philosophy, that all will be happy in any way ; both which positions I shall endeavour to establish hereafter, with the mutual illustrations and confirmations, which these glorious doctrines

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of natural and revealed religion afford to each other. And the gradual diffusion of the *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *christian* revelations, compared with the prophecies relating to the future kingdom of Christ, and with the present circumstances of things, will afford great satisfaction and joy to every pious, benevolent person, who inquires into this subject. These considerations will incline him to believe, that the gospel will, sooner or later, be preached to *every creature in heaven, in earth, under the earth, &c.* and not only preached, but received, obeyed, and made the means of unspeakable happiness to them. And thus this objection will be removed not only in speculation, and according to reason, but in fact, from the present unhappy objectors; and *they will look on him whom they have pierced.*

Thirdly, Having shewn that a gradual and partial promulgation is not inconsistent with the supposition of a true revelation, we may farther affirm, that the particular time and manner, in which the several *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *christian* revelations have been published to the world, are even arguments in their favour. This subject has been well handled by various learned men, particularly Mr. *Arch. Law*, in his *Considerations on the state of the world, &c.* These gentlemen have shewn, that, *cæteris manentibus*, which is in these things always to be previously allowed, the dispensations recorded in the scriptures have been, as far as we can judge, perfectly suited to
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the states of the world at the times when these dispensations were made respectively, *i. e.* to the improvement of mankind in knowledge speculative and practical, to their wants, and to their ability to profit in moral accomplishments ; so that if we suppose either much more, or much less, light to have been afforded to mankind in a supernatural way (*cæteris manentibus* ; and particularly their voluntary powers over their affections and actions, or free-will in the practical sense, remaining the same) their advancement in moral perfection, in voluntary obedience to, and pure love of God, would probably have been less : which suitableness of each revelation to the time when it was made, and to the production of the *maximum* of moral perfection, is an argument for the system of revelation, of the same kind with those for the goodness of God, which are drawn from the mutual fitnesses of the finite and imperfect parts of the natural world to each other, and to the production of the *maximum*, or greatest possible quantity of happiness.

THE EXCLUSION OF ALL GREAT DEGREES OF
ENTHUSIASM AND IMPOSTURE FROM THE
CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS
AND APOSTLES, PROVES THEIR DIVINE
AUTHORITY.

THAT Christ, the prophets and apostles, cannot be charged with any great degrees of enthusiasm or imposture, seems allowed by many unbelievers ; and

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is evident from the first view of their discourses and writings, and of history sacred and profane. We might say, that much more is evident. However, for the present, let us only suppose all great degrees of enthusiasm and imposture excluded, and inquire how far their divine mission may be inferred from that supposition.

First, then, If all great degrees of enthusiasm be excluded, Christ, the prophets and apostles, must know whether or no they were under the influence of the divine spirit, so as to prophesy, speak, and interpret languages, which they had never learnt, and work miracles. Indeed to suppose them not capable of distinguishing these powers in themselves and each other, is to charge them with downright madness.

Secondly, Since then they claimed these powers every where, as the seal of their commission from God; if they had them not, *i. e.* if they had not divine authority, they must be impostors, and endeavour to deceive the world knowingly and deliberately. And this imposture, whether we consider the affront offered to God, or the injury done to mankind, or its duration, its audaciousness, &c. would be the deepest and blackest that has ever appeared in the world. It is therefore excluded by supposition; and consequently, since a less degree will not account for a false claim to divine authority, we must allow, that Christ, the prophets and apostles, made a true one.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Let it be observed, that though cautious unbelievers do not venture to charge Christ, the prophets and apostles, either with gross enthusiasm, or abandoned imposture, in express terms; yet they find themselves obliged to insinuate both in all their attacks upon revealed religion, which is, in effect, to acknowledge the truth of the present proposition; for it is the same thing, as to acknowledge, that both the charge of gross enthusiasm, and that of abandoned imposture, are necessary to support the objections against revealed religion. Now, as neither charge, singly taken, can be maintained; so both together are inconsistent. Gross enthusiasm does not admit that constant caution, and cool dispassionate cunning, which abandoned imposture supposes and requires in order to succeed.

THE RECEPTION WHICH CHRIST, HIS FORE-RUNNERS AND FOLLOWERS, WITH THEIR DOCTRINES, HAVE MET WITH IN ALL AGES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS evidence does, as it were, embrace all the others, and give a particular force to them. For it will be a strong confirmation of all the evidences for the *jewish* and christian religions, if we can shew, that the persons to whom they have been offered, have been influenced by them as much as there was reason to expect, admitting them to be true; and far
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more than could be expected, on supposition that they were false. The most illustrious instance of this, is the victory which the christian miracles and doctrines, with the sufferings of our saviour, and his followers, gained over the whole powers, first, of the *jewish* state, and then of the *Roman* empire, in the primitive times. For here all ranks and kinds of men, princes, priests, *jewish* and heathen, philosophers, populace, with all their associated prejudices from custom and education, and all their corrupt passions and lusts, with all the external advantages of learning, power, riches, honour, and in short, with every thing but truth, endeavoured to suppress the progress that Christ's religion made every day in the world ; but were unable to do it. Yet still the evidence was but of a limited nature ; it required to be set forth, attested, and explained, by the preacher, and to be attended to, and reflected upon, with some degree of impartiality, by the hearer : and therefore, though the progress of it was quick, and the effect general, yet they were not instantaneous and universal. However, it is very evident, that any fraud, or false pretence, must soon have yielded to so great an opposition so circumstanced.

The efficacy which the christian doctrine then had in reforming the lives of many thousands, is here to be considered as a principal branch of this argument, it being evidently the most difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous

ous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others; and whatever does this, cannot, as it seems to me, but come from God. The false religions, and various corruptions of the true, which have from time to time appeared in the world, have been enabled to do this in the imperfect manner in which they have done it, merely, as it seems to me, from that mixture of important truths, and good motives, which they have borrowed from real revelations, *patriarchal, judaical, and christian.*

In like manner as the propagation of christianity, upon its first appearance in the world, evinces its divine original, so does the progress it has since made, and the reception which it meets with at present, amongst the several ranks and orders of men. The detail of this would run out to a great length. It may, however, be of some use, just to observe, that, notwithstanding the great prevalence of infidelity in the present times, it is seldom found to consist with an accurate knowledge of ancient history, sacred and profane, and never with an exalted piety and devotion to God.

And it is as peculiar for the credit of christianity that it should now be supported by the learned, as that it was first propagated by the unlearned; and an incontestable evidence for it, as appears to me, that it has been universally embraced by all eminently
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pious persons, to whom it has been made known in a proper manner.

The analogous observations may be made upon the reception which the *jewish* religion met with both from the *jews* themselves, and from the neighbouring nations. It seems impossible for *Moses* to have delivered the *jews* from their oppression in *Egypt*, and afterwards to have subjected them to his laws, for *Joshua* to have conquered *Canaan*, for the religion to have subsisted in the succeeding times of the judges and kings, for the priests and prophets to have maintained their authority, for the people to have returned, after their captivity, with their religion in an uncorrupted state, and to have supported it and themselves against the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, and power of the *Romans*, and to remain at this day a separate people dispersed all over the world, according to the prophecies, unless the miraculous part of the history of the Old Testament be allowed to be true, as well as the other.

THE RECEPTION WHICH FALSE RELIGIONS
HAVE MET WITH IN THE WORLD, ARE AR-
GUMENTS OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRIS-
TIAN.

I WILL here make a few short remarks,

First, Upon the polytheistical, idolatrous religions
of the ancient world.

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Secondly,

Secondly, Upon the religious institutions of *Zoroaster*.

Thirdly, Upon the imposture of *Mahomet*.

Fourthly, Upon the enthusiastical sects, which have appeared from time to time amongst christians.

All these seem to have met with such success, as might be expected from the mixture of truth and falsehood in them, compared with the then circumstances of things. They are therefore indirect evidences for the truth of the christian religion, since this has met with such success, as cannot be reconciled to the circumstances of things, unless we suppose it true.

And, First, The ancient pagan religions seem evidently to be the degenerated offspring of the patriarchal revelations; and so far to have been true, as they taught a God, a providence, a future state, supernatural communications made to particular persons, especially in the infancy of the world, the present corruption of man, and his deviation from a pure and perfect way, the hopes of a pardon, a mediatorial power, the duties of sacrifice, prayer, and praise, and the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. They were false, as they mixed and polluted these important truths with numberless fables, superstitions, and impieties. That degree of truth, and moral excellence, which remained in them, was a principal cause of their success, and easy propagation, among the people; for
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their moral sense would direct them to approve and receive what was fit and useful. And, had the people of those times penetrated sufficiently into the powers of the human mind, they might have concluded, that religious truths could not be of human invention. However, as the impressions, which the historical and prophetical evidences for the patriarchal revelation had made upon mankind, were not yet obliterated; they believed, upon the authority of tradition, that all important knowledge, especially in sacred matters, was of divine original.

As to the miracles said to be wrought upon certain occasions in pagan nations, we may make these two remarks: First, That the evidence of these is far inferior to that for the *jewish* and christian miracles; so that these may be true, though those be false. Secondly, That we are not sufficiently informed of the ways of providence, to infer that God did not permit, or cause, some miracles to be wrought, even in times and places, where great corruption prevailed. Divine communications and miracles were probably most common soon after the flood, in the infancy of mankind: afterwards, as they advanced towards adult age, these supernatural interpositions grew more rare (unless upon singular occasions, as upon the publication of the law by *Moses*, and of the gospel by Christ; at which times, many and great miracles succeeded each other at short intervals, in order to command awe, attention, and belief); and it may be, that

they ceased in the pagan world for some ages before Christ : or it may be otherwise ; and that, in rare and extraordinary cases, the hand of God appeared in a miraculous manner. Analogy favours the last opinion, as it seems to me ; which also appears to be more countenanced by history, than the contrary one ; and yet the pretences to miracles amongst the pagans were undoubtedly false, in the general.

I come, in the second place, to consider the religious institutions of *Zoroaster*. We have not so full and authentic an history of these, as to compare them properly with the *jewish* or christian revelations. If we suppose, that *Zoroaster* and *Hystaspes* set up the worship of one God, in a simple manner, teaching and inculcating the practice of virtue at the same time, this religion may be said to have considerable moral evidence in its favour. If, farther, we suppose it to be in part derived, either from the descendents of *Abraham* by *Keturah*, called *Brachmans* from him, or from that knowlege of the true God, which the ten tribes, and the *jews*, had then communicated to that part of the world, it will become an evidence for the *jewish* religion.

Thirdly, The religion of *Mahomet* allows and presupposes the truth of the *jewish* and christian. Its rapid propagation was owing chiefly to the mixture of political interests. That part of its doctrines, which is good, is manifestly taken from the scriptures ; and this contributed to its success. However, a
comparison

comparison of mahometism with christianity, in the several particulars of each, seems to shew, that whenever a strict examination is made into the history of mahometism by its professors, the falsehood of it will quickly be made evident to them. It could not stand such a trial, as christianity has, since the revival of learning in these western parts.

It seems easy to apply what has been delivered in the three last paragraphs to the analogous particulars of the religion of *Confucious*, and of other religions found in the *East* and *West Indies*, as far as their histories are sufficiently full and authentic for that purpose.

Lastly, One may make the following remarks, with respect to the several enthusiastic sects, that arise from time to time amongst christians.

First, That their pretences to miracles and prophecies have, in general, been detected and exposed, after some examination and inquiry; unless the sect has begun to decline from other causes, before a strict examination became necessary.

Secondly, That their pretended miracles were not of that evident kind, nor done in the same open manner, &c. as the *jewish* and christian miracles.

Thirdly, That these pretended miracles have not produced lasting effects upon the minds of men, like the *jewish* and *christian*. Now, though a religion may succeed for a time without true miracles, yet it
seems

seems hard to believe, that any should fail with them.

Fourthly, the success of sects has, in general, been owing to their making greater pretences to purity, and gospel perfection, than established churches, and to their both teaching and practising some necessary duties, which established churches have too much neglected in the corrupted state of christianity. And in this light they have been true in part, and have done the most important service to the world. Every sect of christians has magnified some great truth, not above its real value, but above the value which other sects have set upon it; and by this means each important religious truth has had the advantage of being set in a full light by some party or other, though too much neglected by the rest. And the true catholic church and communion of saints unites all these sects, by taking what is right from each, and leaving the errors, falsehoods, and corruptions of each to combat and destroy one another.

And it may be, that mankind will be able in future generations to see, how every other sect, and pretence to revelation, besides those of enthusiastic christians, in whatever age or country it has appeared, has been, all other things remaining the same, suited in the best possible manner, both to particular and general purposes; and that each has prepared the way, in its proper place, for that more complete state predicted

dicted in the scriptures under the titles of *the kingdom of heaven*, and *of righteousness*, *of the New Jerusalem*, &c. Even infidelity, atheism, and scepticism, have their use. The vessels of wrath are still vessels belonging to the Maker and Lord of all things, and answering his infinitely beneficent purposes. *Offences must come*, though *woe be to those, by whom they come!* Each sect, and pretence, and objection, has given, or will give, way in its time. The true and pure religion of Christ alone grows more evident and powerful from every attack that is made upon it, and converts the bitterness and poison of its adversaries into nourishment for itself, and an universal remedy for the pains and sorrows of a miserable, degenerate world.

T H E E N D.

